

The mindful issue: Practices, poses, and tips for focus and inner strength

yoga

JOURNAL

**Build hip and
knee flexibility
and strength**

LIFE IN BALANCE

Fuel your happiness

Foods that fight depression,
anxiety, and more

Master Lotus Pose

Gentle prep and
how-to, page 34

4 reasons
to quit sugar

Calm mind, happy heart

Meditations and
smart strategies to
enhance your life

The anatomy of injury

8 poses to stay safe
on your mat

*How to be a
catalyst for
positive change*

17 poses to
prepare your
mind for meditation
from cover model **Rina Jakubowicz**



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*To heal the world, we must
first heal ourselves.*

– Seane Corn

Seane Corn

Yoga teacher, activist,
co-founder Off The Mat, Into The World



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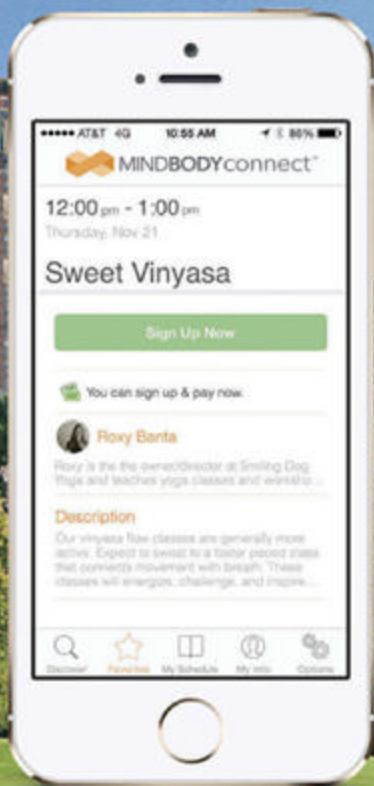


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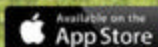
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WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

Hear more from favorite teachers on the *yogajournal.com* Namaste blog. Tune in for weekly insights on deepening your practice from Sianna Sherman, founder of Mythic Yoga Flow, plus just-do-it inspiration from Two Fit Moms Masumi Goldman and Laura Kasperzak.

TUNE IN

Seeking music for your practice? Download Nebraska vinyasa teacher Mary Clare Sweet's (page 86) exclusive playlist at yogajournal.com/sweetsounds.

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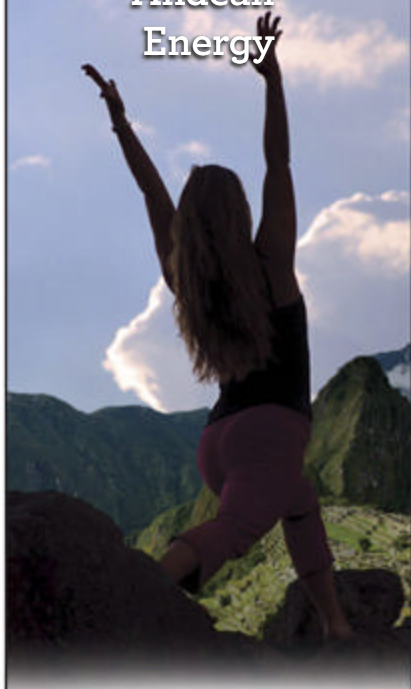
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editor's letter

aiming high

RECENTLY, I HAD the honor of serving as a judge for the National Magazine Awards, which are kind of like Pulitzer Prizes for magazines. The judging process is all very hush-hush, but I can say that when I looked at the criteria for General Excellence—something all of us want to achieve in life, right?—one really resonated with me: How well does each magazine serve the interests of its readers?

This is something I think about every day, several times a day: How well are we, the editors of *Yoga Journal*, giving you, dear reader, what you want and need in every issue? With nearly 2.2 million of you, I know there isn't a single formula that will satisfy everyone, and that's a good thing—our differences make us beautiful! Still, that won't stop us from at least trying to create the perfect magazine for every yogi, and the only way we'll even come close is by listening and responding to your feedback.

To that point, one request I've heard a lot recently is for more anatomy insight. You got it. Check out "Balancing Act" (page 62), which offers a unique look at the anatomy of injury, plus preventative poses from Ray Long, MD, founder of Bandha Yoga, a practice that merges Iyengar's precise alignment with detailed anatomy lessons. You've also asked for greater representation of the diversity within the yoga community. I want the same, and this month I'm pleased to have Rina Jakubowicz, a Cuban-Argentinean vinyasa teacher and one of a small but growing group who leads classes in Spanish, on our cover and teaching Home Practice (page 42). And you say you can't get enough world-class instructors. Hear, hear! We're thrilled to have Sharon Gannon, co-founder of the Jivamukti Yoga method, teach us how to move from Baddha Konasana to Padmasana in *Yogapedia* (page 34).

Finally, you like our new tradition of dedicating each issue of *YJ* to an important cause, and so do we. This month, we'd like to shine a light on multiple sclerosis in honor of MS Awareness Month. Research suggests yoga can help ease MS symptoms in sufferers; to find an MS-friendly class near you or get involved in finding a cure, please visit nationallmsociety.org.

Wishing you a generally excellent March—and keep the feedback coming!

Carin Gorrell
Editor in Chief

yoga JOURNAL
40 YEARS
{ 1975 - 2015 }

Cover model and all-around good sport Rina Jakubowicz and I played a game of "Who's taller?" on set between takes.



PHOTOS: JEFF NELSON; STYLIST: EMILY CHOI; HAIR/MAKEUP: BETH WALKER; ON RINA: TOP: NIKE; BOTTOMS: UNDER ARMOUR; ON CARIN: HER OWN CLOTHING



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Brew News

Breweries that offer yoga classes followed by beer tastings may be serving up more than a practice and post-class camaraderie. Sipping a pint may have health advantages too, suggests a recent study published in the *Journal of Cereal Science*. A Finnish research team analyzed barley grains (a common brewing starch) and beer samples, and discovered ample hordatines, phenolic compounds that may possess big-time antioxidant power. Plus, hordatines have been found to help keep digestion humming (a nice complement to twisting asanas) by triggering smooth-muscle contractions. To reap the most benefits, order beers brewed with barley malts, such as lagers, ales, stouts, and porters; wheat and light beers typically contain barley but also wheat, rice, or corn, so hordatine concentrations are often lower, says the study's lead researcher, Juha-Matti Pihlava. **NANCY RONES**

what's
the

YOGA

news
trends
inspiration



BEN FULLERTON

Brewhouse Yoga at
Sanitas Brewing Co. in
Boulder, Colorado.

Healing Moves

March is Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month; in welcome news, yoga can help improve mobility and quality of life for people living with the debilitating disease. In a recent Rutgers University study, women with MS learned about yoga philosophy and practiced deep-breathing exercises and restorative poses for 90 minutes twice a week. After eight weeks, they were better able to walk for short distances and longer periods of time, had better fine-motor coordination, and showed improvements in balance while reaching backward. They also reported less pain and fatigue than when they started the trial, according to the researchers. To find an MS-friendly yoga class, teacher, or video based on location and symptoms, contact the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (nationalmssociety.org, 800-344-4867).

The improvement in memory and recall that older adults experience after practicing yoga three times a week for eight weeks, reports *The Journals of Gerontology*. More proof that yoga strengthens both mind and body.

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Fresh Voice

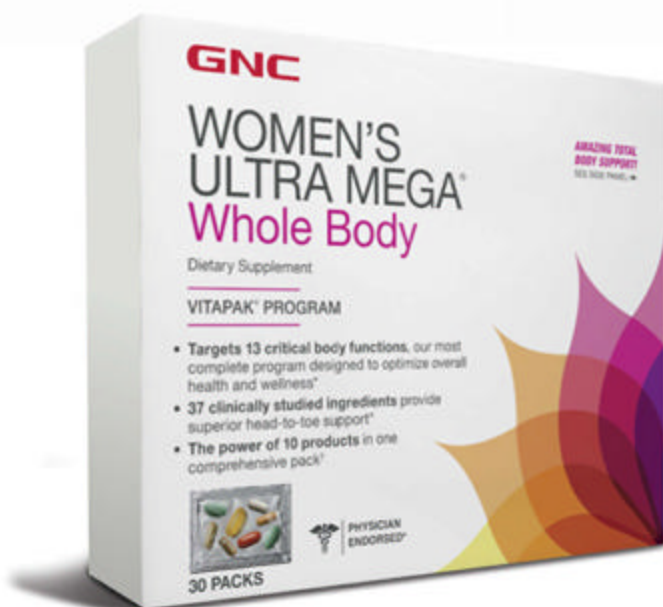
In her new book *Do Your Om Thing: Bending Yoga Tradition to Fit Your Modern Life*, yoga teacher and blogger Rebecca Pacheco (omgal.com) brings a contemporary voice to yoga's ancient teachings and philosophy. Flip through it to find inspiration for your practice and more thoughtful living (\$27, harpercollins.com).



SALT therapy

There's something especially healing about practicing yoga and meditation on the beach while inhaling the salty sea air. Now, some yoga teachers are replicating the experience by offering classes in manmade salt rooms with walls covered in Himalayan salt crystals where a dry salt vapor is pumped into the air. The therapeutic service, known as halotherapy, dates back to Europe in the 19th century, when a Polish physician recognized that the salt-mine workers he was treating had very healthy respiratory systems. Modern halotherapy businesses like Breathe Easy in New York City and the Salt Mine Arium in Seattle tout their rooms as a natural treatment for respiratory problems, as well as a place to relax and recharge. There's no scientific proof of halotherapy's health claims, so take a class if you're intrigued—but with a grain of salt.

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Farm2Fashion uses locally sourced wool for its FarmLuxe line of clothing and accessories.

Work your yoga clothes

Dress up your practice wear with a few office-appropriate accessories. By Emily Choi



Meeting with the boss

Pants with graphic detailing say sophisticated, not ready-to-sweat. Pair them with a long tank for coverage, and an athletic peplum jacket for structure.

Betsey Johnson Peplum Jacket, \$72, sold at Macy's; **Beyond Yoga** Racerback Drawstring Tank, \$66, beyondyoga.com; **James Perse** Yosemite Riding Pant, \$105, jamesperse.com; **Toms** Majorca Peep Toe Bootie, \$98, toms.com



Giving a presentation

Feel confident and comfortable at the front of the room in classically versatile black yoga pants with an attached skirt, a silky kimono, and cute vegan loafers.

Otherworld Kimono, \$284, otherworldapparel.com; **Alternative** Balance Tank, \$52, alternativeapparel.com; **OMgirl** Shanti Crop Top (in Landscape), \$39, and Nomad Legging, \$74, barefootyoga.com; **Noah Leonie** Sand, \$235, noah-shop.com



Casual Friday

Yoga pants are typically a go for meeting-free days, but to keep it classy and complete your look, add a sporty jacket and sandals with a pop of color.

Athleta Floral Fade Zip Rashguard, \$79, athleta.com; **Vimmia** Poise Tee, \$84, and Twist Pant, \$120, anthropologie.com; **Camper** Limi, \$175, camper.com



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FROM LEFT: A heated-oil treatment; one of Miraval's many serene spaces; aerial silks supporting Padmasana.

Retreat to a desert sanctuary in Tucson, Arizona

By Jean Weiss

THREE MONTHS INTO a fulfilling yet stressful new job, I was in dire need of a restorative minivacation. So when the chance came to visit Miraval Resort & Spa outside Tucson, Arizona, I gave myself permission to take it, just for me. I was not disappointed: After three days, I returned home with an open heart, a more supple and integrated body, and renewed motivation to remain grounded and balanced as I reentered my hectic lifestyle.

My transformation unfolded through a series of bodywork appointments, meditations, spa treatments, and fun yoga, including a yoga hike and a surprisingly accessible aerial yoga class. I'd been apprehensive, thinking using the aerial silks meant doing circus tricks, but instead the cloth supported my shoulders in poses I normally have trouble with, such as Camel and Warrior III. I also had access to Miraval's signature juice drinks and healthy portions of delicious low-calorie food throughout the day, and at night a bed that felt like sleeping on a cloud.

But although I loved everything I did, three Miraval experiences are the reason I'll return. First, my *doshas* were balanced by an Ultimate Ayurvedic spa treatment that began with *abhyanga*—a warm-oil massage to release toxins and improve circulation—and ended with soothing Shirodhara therapy, in which heated oil poured over my forehead relaxed and balanced the nervous system. Next came a

PLAN YOUR TRIP

More Tucson must-dos:

SHOP UP Pop-Cycle, a local favorite store selling upcycled goods, stocks a revolving stash of repurposed merchandise, ranging from jewelry to wall art (popcycleshop.com). Or, check out the clothing store Fed by Threads, where sales of each animal-free, American-made garment fund 12 emergency meals to the hungry (fedbythreads.com).

QUENCH YOUR THIRST Borderlands Brewing Company offers beer made mostly with local ingredients. Currently on tap: Ol' Loco IPA, Prickly Pear Wheat, and Noche Dulce (borderlandsbrewing.com). Or, relax with high-quality tea at Seven Cups (sevencups.com).

OM IN THE DESERT Sample the Tucson yoga vibe at The Yoga Tree, a cute adobe building where you'll get a discount when you bring along a friend (theyogatreeaz.com); take a \$6 drop-in class on a cork floor at Tucson Yoga (tucsonyoga.com); or, for as low as \$5 a class, check out Yoga Oasis, named best studio by *Tucson Weekly* (yogaoasis.com).



THE BALANCE BEFORE THE BALANCE

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life-changing Tibetan Chakra Balancing session with master practitioner Pamela Lancaster, who immediately sensed and communicated a key emotional puzzle piece that had been missing in my life. To ground, cleanse, and balance my energy points, she used healing sounds and vibrations from Tibetan bowls and symphonic gongs. Finally, a hot-stone massage offered a similar missing

puzzle piece, this time for my body: I learned steps to correct imbalances following a foot injury. As my visit came to an end, I felt sad to leave but energized and eager to jump back into my life at home. (For more info, visit miravalresorts.com.)



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Dear Subaru,

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"We recently bought some land in northern Minnesota and the county asked us what we'd like to name the new road entering the property. Since we're on our sixth Subaru, what else could we call it but Outback Road? The sign is so popular, it's already been stolen!" – Lindsay S., Ely, MN. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**



Tell your story at subaru.com/dearsubaru

Amana Yoga studio in Boulder, Colorado, uses the rhythmic sound of singing bowls to calm the vata dosha in workshops.

ayurveda in MOTION

Select yoga studios across the country are combining two great healers under one roof: Ayurveda and asana. Teachers assess students' constitutions (the dominant *doshas* of *pitta*, *vata*, and *kapha*) and offer balancing poses, aromatherapy, and music during class to address seasonal shifts described in Ayurveda. For instance, March is typically a transition from the airy vata season to the cool, wet kapha season in spring, says Alia Sebben, co-owner of Amana Yoga, an Ayurveda studio in Boulder, Colorado, that partners with VPK by Maharishi Ayurveda. "In kapha season, we're focused on going inward, eating a lot more, and sleeping a lot more, so you want a more vigorous practice like power vinyasa that builds heat, and twists and forward folds to reset digestion as a spring detox," says Sebben. Pamela Quinn, founder of Elemental OM studios in Cincinnati, also adjusts her teaching based on Ayurveda. For example, students who are aggressive and pushing themselves hard in class are having a pitta day, and may need cooling Moon Salutations, says Quinn. She also chooses the class-soundtrack tempo based on students' constitutions. Learn more about Ayurveda and how to identify and balance your dosha at yogajournal.com. AMANDA TUST



Answers to your questions about detoxifying yoga, back pain, digestive distress, and more.

My teacher always describes certain poses, especially twists, as detoxifying. Can you actually wring toxins out of your body?

Not exactly. Your liver and lymphatic system constantly flush harmful toxins out of your body on their own. And although twists have benefits ranging from increased flexibility to stimulated appetite, there's no scientific research that proves twisting asanas improve liver and lymphatic-system function. Practicing deep yogic breathing, however, will assist your organs in the detoxification process. You can also decrease the toxic load on your body by reducing the amount of toxins you put into it. Try to replace packaged foods (which can be loaded with undesirable processed flour, sugar, and preservatives) with nutrient-dense whole foods like nuts, fruits, vegetables, ancient grains (such as quinoa, farro, and spelt), and seeds. And swap out chemical-based personal-care products for natural, plant-based alternatives.

Eric Grasser, MD, CAy

Functional-medicine and Ayurvedic doctor and founder of Unity Medicine, Santa Fe, New Mexico

I switched to a standing desk, but I often get lower-back aches. Which yoga poses can prevent the pain?

Working at a standing desk orients your spine into proper posture—your chin is parallel to the floor and your belly is firm. But standing for too long (even with good posture) can also place pressure on your lower back, as it's forced to engage muscles that run along the length of your spine. Incorporating a twice-daily yoga routine can help improve posture and relieve back pain: Practice upon waking in the morning and again in the afternoon. Start in Downward Dog, roll through to Plank, lower into Chaturanga Dandasana, and finish in Upward Dog. Repeat twice. When you're at your desk, it's wise to alternate sitting and standing, so use a desk with an adjustable height. Or if you have a standing desk, get a taller chair, so you can alternate sitting and standing every few hours throughout the course of the day.

Kenneth K. Hansraj, MD

Orthopedic surgeon, Poughkeepsie, New York

I've tried going off gluten to relieve stomach issues. It seems to help at first, but then my symptoms come back. What's going on?

Not everyone who experiences gastrointestinal distress is gluten intolerant or suffering from celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder that causes damage to the small intestine when gluten is digested. Your doctor can do a blood test to rule out celiac symptoms. She can also assess you for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), another condition characterized by bloating, gas, and diarrhea. Or it may be a group of short-chain carbohydrates called fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols (FODMAPs) that's to blame. Found in wheat, barley, onions, garlic, legumes, apples, pears, and more, these carbs pull water into the intestines and quickly ferment, creating excess gas and symptoms in sensitive people. While FODMAPs are not a known cause of IBS, a low-FODMAP diet may provide relief for those who suffer from IBS symptoms.

Kate Scarlata, RD, LDN

Digestive-health expert and co-author of *21-Day Tummy*, Boston, Massachusetts

The best pose for scoliosis sufferers? | Side Plank

Recent research published in *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* found that scoliosis patients who held Side Plank Pose for 90 seconds per day for about 7 months reduced their spinal curvature by an average of 32 percent.

Have questions for the experts?

Send them to letters@yogajournal.com

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an
interview
with

tessa

hicks peterson, PhD

A social-justice educator shares tips on how to move from raising your consciousness about inequalities and biases to taking actions that improve the world.

This is the second in a yearlong series of interviews conducted by guest editor Seane Corn, founder of the yoga service organization Off the Mat, Into the World, each featuring a different leader in yoga service and social-justice work. Everyone profiled here will join Corn in teaching a workshop on yoga for social change at Yoga Journal LIVE! in Estes Park, Colorado, September 27–30. This month, Corn interviews Tessa Hicks Peterson, PhD, assistant professor of urban studies at Pitzer College in Claremont, California, and an activist for social justice and antibias education.



SEANE CORN Where does your personal interest in social justice come from?

TESSA HICKS PETERSON To answer, I have to go way back. I think we always need to begin by acknowledging our ancestors and their influence on our paths. My maternal great-grandparents fled persecution as Jews in Eastern Europe and came to the United States. My maternal grandparents were labeled Communists and blacklisted because of their deeply progressive values around social change, justice, and equality. And my parents met at a radical social-justice filmmakers' collective, making documentaries about the integration of schools and the fight against the war in Vietnam. So I think it's in my blood. Also, I was born on the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., and from a very young age, I felt connected to him and to the movement for social justice.

SC How would you define social justice?

THP Broadly speaking, I think social justice is about securing fair and just treatment for all, as well as access to resources for all people. By resources, I mean adequate and quality health care, education, land, water, food—and respect. Respect is often left off the list, but being seen as a valuable, contributing member of a community, being respected for your input and not being marginalized in any way, is an important component of social justice. When groups are not afforded access and rights to these things, injustice occurs.

SC What are some examples of social injustice in our everyday lives that may go unnoticed?

THP There are little things and big things. For example, for so long, the only “flesh-colored” Band-Aids you

could buy were the color of white people's flesh. And when the people in your textbook or in the commercials and shows you watch create a “norm” that is rich, white, beautiful, thin, and straight, it becomes a message both to those who have those qualities and those who do not. We start to see certain groups or identities as more valued, and, thus, they're provided more access. We think now of our black president and all the progressive things that are happening without really recognizing the deep injustices that still exist today: Women are still paid less than men; students of color are still not achieving at the same rate as their white peers; LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning] communities and queer youths are being harassed to such severe degrees that many are killing themselves, or are even being killed.

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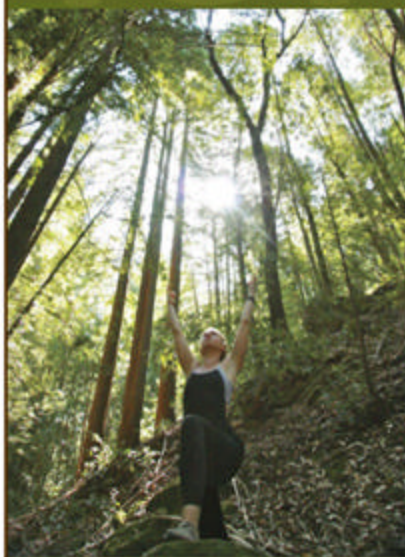


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GAME CHANGERS

SC *What do you see as the intersection between your teachings on social justice and the work within the yoga community?*

THP Each of us has a deep responsibility to challenge violence, oppression, and injustice because we are all interconnected. This involves putting ourselves in very uncomfortable positions, and in yoga we're physically putting ourselves in uncomfortable positions all the time, right? We find our breath, ground ourselves, push past limitations, learn how to live at that edge and find compassion for ourselves. This is the same with

social injustice. We can't be afraid to face our ignorance or internal biases, our fears and apathy, our own oppression and pain; we must sit in that discomfort and learn how to find our breath and connect and build compassion for ourselves and for others, including the ones we don't understand, the ones

we think are too different from us culturally, racially, religiously—even the ones we hate.

This is where yoga really teaches much to social-justice activism. We learn how to balance our rage with compassion for the abuser, the racist, the homophobe, the people who exclude others. That's the toughest practice of all. An example is someone who wants to do work on domestic violence based on her own experience of abuse, but she will only work with women. That's understandable, and important work, but it also limits that person's influence. If it's men who are perpetrating the violence, they also need healing, services, community, and rehabilitation to break the cycle of violence because they, too, are often victims of violence. Individual and collective change must include *all* of us.

SC *How can people in the yoga community deepen their awareness of social injustice and take steps in their own lives to effect change in the world?*

THP Sometimes good intentions and good deeds aren't enough. I want yogis

to critically reimagine *seva* practice.

Often, we're doing a service in the community to heal ourselves, and this is not necessarily bad, but it can create limitations on the impact and effectiveness we are able to have.

And I would be cautious about the use of the word "service." Sometimes when we say "service," we create a hierarchy between the server and the served, the have and the have-not, the savior and the needy being saved. We need to understand what the community being served wants or needs, what

social change they are seeking, and whether they have a voice in designing the service projects that will benefit them. Are we serving soup without looking at why we have so much hunger and unequal distribution of food in this country where we have so much wealth? If we're not looking

at the structural issues that create the conditions that necessitate our service, we're only partially engaged with the social-change effort.

SC *It's one thing that you and I are having this conversation, but what can individuals do to create change?*

THP Do what speaks to you. If you're good at accounting and spreadsheets, volunteer to do that for an organization. If you want to be on the streets talking to people, get involved in community organizing. If you're interested in policy, you can lobby on local or national levels. There are so many ways to participate in groups doing work that is mutually nurturing, respectful, and ethical. Once you become conscious of the biases you may hold, the injustices that exist in the world, and how you might be affected by them or perpetuating them, then you can come to terms with and move past any guilt that might result from being in a privileged position or any paralysis that might exist from being victimized or oppressed in some way. We have to be able to move from raising our consciousness to taking action. 🙏



LEARN MORE

To read more of this interview and find out about *Yoga Journal's* Game Changers and their teachings, visit yogajournal.com/gamechangers

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practice

WELL

off the WALL

Rope walls make great challenges for boot-camp or adventure-race courses, and now they're securing a place in yoga studios—another sign of the legacy of the late, great B.K.S. Iyengar, who used knotted ropes and anchors for improving alignment for more than 70 years. "The ropes can bring students' bodies back into alignment in a very gentle way, and I believe they act as a physical therapist, chiropractor, and massage therapist in one," says Amanda Neufeld, owner of and instructor at Yoga Studio Satya in Colorado Springs, a studio that includes a rope wall. "Students have moments where they feel the correct alignment on the wall, and this translates to the floor to improve their daily yoga." With the number of certified Iyengar teachers in the United States on the rise by about 10 to 20 percent each year over the past few years, according to the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States, it's easier than ever to find an Iyengar rope-wall workshop in your area. But even if the slow precision of Iyengar classes isn't your thing, there are now a variety of studios, such as those offering mainly vinyasa-style yoga classes, that have started installing similar prop walls if you want to give the ropes a try. **MATTIE SCHULER**

Students use ropes to practice inversions during an Iyengar Yoga class.

Poses of the month

How to move from
Baddha Konasana to Padmasana

By Sharon Gannon

Baddha Konasana

baddha = bound · kona = angle · asana = pose

Bound Angle Pose

Benefit

Opens the hips and encourages a sense of grounding while you work on lengthening the spine

Instruction

- 1 Sit with your feet together, letting your knees open to the sides. Ground your sitting bones into the earth while you simultaneously lengthen through the spine and torso.
- 2 Press your heels together to activate your legs, and open the balls of your feet with your hands, like opening a book. This helps protect the knees in this pose and more advanced seated poses and hip openers like Padmasana.
- 3 Keep pressing your heels together as you extend your thighs horizontally to the right and left, releasing your knees closer to the floor.
- 4 Moving from the base of your spine, lift through your core, engaging Mula Bandha, or the root energy lock and muscles of the pelvic floor.
- 5 Keep your face relaxed. Inhale to find more length,

and exhale to ground down and maintain your connection to the earth.

- 6 If you want to go deeper, exhale to bend forward from your hips, maintaining the extension in your spine. Try to bring the chest to the feet and the chin past the toes.
- 7 Hold either variation for several deep breaths. If you are folded, inhale to come up. Exhale to release the pose.

OUR PRO Teacher and model **Sharon Gannon** co-founded the Jivamukti Yoga method with David Life in New York City in 1984, and now oversees nearly 40 studios around the world. She is a student of Brahmananda Sarasvati, Swami Nirmalananda, K. Pattabhi Jois, and Shyamdas, as well as a pioneer in teaching yoga as spiritual activism. Her new vegan cookbook, *Simple Recipes for Joy*, was released last year. For more information, visit jivamuktityoga.com and simplerecipesforjoy.com.



DON'T press the balls of the feet together, which can cause tension in the outer thighs and hips.



DON'T round your back. Instead, extend your spine upward, or forward past your feet.

PHOTOS: CHRIS FANNING; MODEL: SHARON GANNON; HAIR/MAKEUP: SUZANNE KATZMAN WITH WILHELMINA; CLOTHING: MODEL'S OWN

Baddha Konasana

Baddha Konasana
modifications,
page 36

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pages 38–39

Padmasana,
pages 40–41

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Modify Baddha Konasana if needed to find safe alignment for your body.



If you need help activating your hips and inner thighs...

TRY placing a block between the feet. Press your heels firmly into the block at at least 90 miles per hour! Pull the balls of the feet away from the block, turning the soles to face upward. Then place your hands behind you, pressing into the floor to lengthen your spine.



If you have tight hips...

TRY placing rolled-up blankets underneath your legs. This can help relieve tension in your hips and reduce strain on your knees. Roll the blankets so they are at a comfortable height and place them so they support the femurs and the lower legs.



If you are rounding through your lower back...

TRY looping a strap, putting it across your sacrum, over the tops of your thighs, and underneath your feet. The strap will lift your lower back and hold your feet closer to your pelvis, giving you a deeper groin stretch. The strap should be tight, but not so restrictive that you feel compression in your hip joints. It will provide support much like the blankets did in the last modification, holding your body in place so that you can relax deeper into the pose.

DISSOLVE NEGATIVITY

Baddha Konasana and Padmasana, like all hip-opening asanas, bring your focus to the second, or svadhisthana, chakra, the seat of our emotional and creative desires. These postures present opportunities to purify that chakra of negative, unresolved sexual or creative relationship issues.

Tightness encountered in the hips, groins, and core during Baddha Konasana and Padmasana can come directly from our karma, or how we have treated others in our past. When we are able to let go of tension in these areas by stretching and surrendering, it is an indication that karmic issues with those past relationships are resolving, freeing up creative energy for other pursuits. Try to maintain a calm mind and a forgiving heart, free of anger and blame toward others, while practicing these intense hip openers.



Strawberry Flaxtini

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- ½ cup strawberries
- 1 Tbsp flaxseeds, ground

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- 1 tsp stevia (optional)



Mocha Magic

- 8 Tbsp Almased
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- 1 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ cup cold coffee
- 1 tsp stevia (optional)

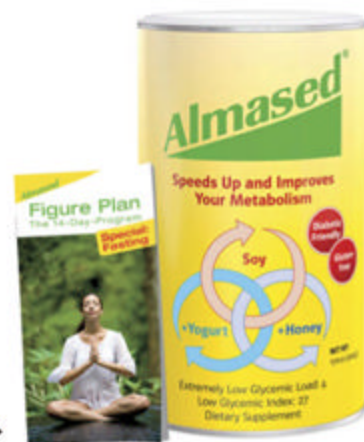


Cinnamon Roll

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- 1 tsp stevia (optional)



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Increase hip flexibility and learn how to keep your knees safe with these **prep poses** for Padmasana.

Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose)

Benefit

Stretches the hips and hip flexors

Instruction

Loop a strap and place it across your sacrum, over the tops of your thighs, and around your feet. Place folded or rolled-up blankets under each of your knees and lie on your back with your heels together, as they were in Baddha Konasana. Stay here with eyes closed, and relax for 5 to 15 minutes to stretch the hips and hip flexors intensely.



Baddha Konasana,
page 34

Viparita Karani, variation (Legs-up-the-Wall Pose, variation)

Benefit

Isolates and intensifies hip opening

Instruction

Lie on the floor, with your buttocks close to a wall and your knees in toward your chest. Extend your legs up the wall and open them into a straddle. Bend your knees into a Baddha Konasana shape. Using your hands, roll the flesh of your thighs open and gently press the inner thighs toward the wall. This pressure and the wall's support will help you open your hips. Stay here for 5 to 15 breaths.

Baddha Konasana
modifications,
page 36

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Ankle-to-Knee Pose

Benefit

Works the hips while helping you find and maintain length in the spine

Instruction

From a seated position, place your right knee on top of your left ankle and your right ankle on top of your left knee. Flex your feet to prevent your ankles from overstretching. Inhale to lengthen your spine. Exhale and stay upright or fold forward, with your forearms on your top leg or on the floor in front of you. Be mindful not to round the lower back. Hold for 5 to 15 breaths. Switch legs and repeat.



Padmasana
prep poses

Padmasana,
pages 40-41

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Find your seat and release physical and emotional tension by moving mindfully, **step by step**, into Padmasana.

Benefit

Opens the hips, stretches the hip flexors, and fosters a sense of grounding, preparing you for seated meditation

Instruction

1 Start in Baddha Konasana, rooting down through your sitting bones and pressing your heels together. Open the balls of your feet with your hands and let your knees open to the sides. Inhale to find length in your spine.

2 Lift your right leg, sliding your left knee in closer to your midline. Place your right foot high on the left thigh. Be careful not to sickle the right foot, instead keeping it flexed with the sole facing upward. The angle of your foot reflects the rotation of your leg in relationship to your hip: If the foot isn't turned up, you are trying to rotate your leg from the knee down, which could cause strain and injury.

3 Lift your left leg, with the thigh rotated outward. Again, be careful not to rotate from the knee, but rather from the hip. Keep the sternum lifted, extending the spine.



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Padmasana

Padma = lotus · asana = pose

Lotus Pose



4 Place the left foot high on the right thigh for the full expression of Padmasana. Try not to let the ankles sickle. Release your knees toward the floor and lengthen your spine. If your knees are far from the floor, and your spine is rounding, sit on the edge of a folded blanket. Take slow, deep breaths and stay in the pose for at least 5 breaths, holding it for as long as is comfortable.

Stay safe

While wonderfully effective hip openers, these poses can be harmful to the knees if practiced in the wrong way. If you feel any pain in the knees, back off immediately. The knees should never be made to rotate; they are designed to primarily hinge forward and backward. On the other hand, your hips have a huge range of motion and can rotate many degrees. In Baddha Konasana, you learn the proper hip rotation for Padmasana, so you can avoid knee pain and injury in this final pose.



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10-, 20-, and 30-minute sequences for moving into meditation

By Rina Jakubowicz

If you have 10 minutes, try this practice.



NOT ALL MEDITATION practice has to happen sitting perfectly still in Lotus Pose. By focusing your awareness inward, on the breath and the way your body moves through transitions and feels in poses, you'll reap many of the same rewards that seated meditation provides—heightened focus, balanced energy, a sense of grounding, and blissful stress release.

Practice tip

Use these four focal points to stay present, elevating your practice into a moving meditation.

- 1 SPINE:** Ask yourself in every pose, "What is my spine doing here?" The answer should always be that it is extending. Try to lengthen in every posture by creating space between each vertebrae, utilizing your back and core muscles for support.
- 2 SENSE OF GROUNDING:** Assess which parts of your body are touching the floor as you practice. Actively push those parts into the floor as a way to engage your whole body and build strength.
- 3 TRANSITIONS:** As you transition between poses, be aware of how your body moves. Pay attention to physical sensations—both muscular and skeletal.
- 4 BREATH:** Throughout your practice, check in with your breath and see if it's rhythmic, fluid, and consistent. Use deep Ujjayi Pranayama, or Victorious Breath, with even inhales and exhales.

Warm up

Start in Samasthiti (Equal Standing) or Tadasana (Mountain Pose), pressing your feet into the floor. Place your hands in Anjali Mudra at the center of your chest. As you inhale, lift your arms overhead; as you exhale, bring them back to Anjali Mudra. Repeat for 1–2 minutes.

Instructions: For a 10-minute practice, do 4 rounds of the following sequence (a round is the sequence practiced on both the right and left sides). In round 1, hold each pose for 30 seconds, or 5–6 breaths. In rounds 2 and 3, hold each pose for 10–12 seconds, or 2 breaths. And in round 4, hold each pose for 5–6 seconds, or 1 breath.



High Lunge

From Tadasana, on an inhalation, gracefully step your left foot back about 2 to 3 feet behind you, placing it on the floor with care. Be mindful during the transition. Exhale as you bend your right knee so that it is directly above your right ankle, with your right thigh as parallel to the floor as possible. Keep both legs equally active, pushing both feet into the floor to find balance.



Virabhadrasana II Warrior Pose II

Carefully plant your left foot flat on your mat, turning the toes out slightly to create a close-to-60-degree angle. Line up your front heel with your back arch. Do not lean forward or arch your back. Maintain spinal awareness, keeping your shoulders above your hips, lower ribs pulled in, and your core engaged. Actively extend your arms and feel your legs ground down.



Reverse Warrior

Keep the lower half of your body exactly the same as you extend your right arm up and back. Place your left arm along your left leg but don't apply any weight. Feel your back muscles engage as you transition from Warrior Pose II to Reverse Warrior. Keep your sternum lifted so that your spine stays long. Take full and rhythmic breaths. Inhale to come back to Warrior II.



Humble Warrior, variation

Interlace your fingers behind your back. Contract your leg muscles, then slowly exhale to lower your chest and right shoulder carefully to the inside of your right knee. Maintain equal weight in both feet. Feel your chest and shoulders open while you reach your arms over your head. Breathe fully and deeply. Inhale to lift the chest, exhale to release the hands, and come back to Tadasana.

End here with Savasana 3 minutes

OR, HAVE 10 MORE MINUTES? TURN TO PAGE 44 TO EXTEND YOUR SEQUENCE.



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If you have 20 minutes, add these poses to your sequence.



Instructions: Do 3 rounds of this sequence, switching sides with the first four poses and doing the final two poses twice each. In round 1, hold each pose for 30 seconds, or 5–6 breaths. In round 2, hold each pose for 10–12 seconds, or 2 breaths. And in round 3, hold each pose for 5–6 seconds, or 1 breath.



Vrksasana, variation
Tree Pose, variation

From Tadasana, shift your weight to the right foot. On an inhalation, lift your left leg and externally rotate it, turning the sole of the foot to the ceiling and placing it on the upper right thigh in Ardha Padmasana (Half Lotus Pose). Bring one or both hands to Anjali Mudra. Inhale to lengthen your spine. Move slowly and gracefully, being mindful of all four focal points (see page 42) at once in order to stay present.



Virabhadrasana III
Warrior Pose III

Maintain your attention on the standing, right leg, and on an inhalation, bring your left knee into your chest. On an exhalation, lean the torso forward by leading with the chest. Maintain a long spine as your left leg straightens behind you. Keep both of your legs engaged, as you extend your arms in front of you alongside your ears. Be mindful of your spinal alignment and your transition.



Natarajasana
Lord of the Dance Pose

Bend your left knee and bring your left arm behind you to grab your left foot, turning your palm out with your thumb up. Press your foot into your hand to create the traction you need to lift your leg and chest higher. If needed, lean forward to find equilibrium. Stabilize the standing leg by engaging the quadriceps. Keep your eyes fixed on one spot, or a *drishti*, a couple of feet in front of you. Your center in this pose is your strong core.



Anjaneyasana Low Lunge

With your eyes still fixed on your *drishti*, slowly bend your right knee, and, with control, lower your left leg behind you so that it lands without a sound. (If that isn't possible, move through a Standing Forward Bend first). Gently place your left knee on the floor and point your left foot back, pressing the top of the foot into the floor. Extend your arms alongside your ears. Square your chest and lift the sternum. Push down into the front foot to connect to the floor and pull the lower belly up and in so that you are centered and lifted.



Forearm Plank

On an exhalation, gently place both forearms on the floor inside your right foot. Step your right leg back slowly, bringing it back to meet your left leg. Keep your feet hip-width apart. Align your spine so that your back, hips, and legs are as parallel to the floor as possible. Push the forearms into the floor and the heels back while engaging your quadriceps and core muscles. Breathe deeply and fully, focusing on the navel. Exhale to release to the floor. Inhale to push back up into Forearm Plank. Repeat.



Adho Mukha Svanasana
Downward-Facing Dog Pose

Using your core, lift your hips and straighten one arm at a time. Press all four corners of your palms into the floor. Make sure your feet are hip-width apart, and your hands are shoulder-width apart, then extend the spine and rotate the pelvis forward to lift the sitting bones. Check in with all four focal points. Exhale to Balasana (Child's Pose) and inhale to come back to Down Dog. Repeat, then inhale to step your feet forward, exhale to fold, and inhale to come up to Tadasana.

End here with Savasana 4 minutes

OR, HAVE 10 MORE MINUTES? TURN TO PAGE 46 TO EXTEND YOUR SEQUENCE.



WHAT'S AT YOUR CORE?

MADAN BALI

LILIAS FOLAN

SEANE CORN

HALA KHOURI

SUZANNE STERLING

SHARON GANNON

DAVID LIFE

GURMUKH KAUR KHALSA

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If you have 30 minutes, add these poses to your sequence.



30 seconds
[5–6 breaths],
repeat 3 times

Ustrasana Camel Pose

Using your core, gently bring your knees down to the floor from Tadasana. Lift the torso perpendicular to the floor. Press the knees into the floor and lift the sternum. On an inhalation, start arching backward, maintaining spinal extension in the lower back. Place your hands on your feet while pushing the hips forward. Breathe deeply and only go as far as your breath and body allow. Inhale to come up. Rest in kneeling for 2 to 3 breaths before repeating.



1 minute
[10–12 breaths]

Malasana Garland Pose

Come to all fours with your feet together and your toes tucked under. Lift your knees off the floor, separating them wider than your hips. Drop your torso between your legs and extend the spine, reaching your arms in front of you. Create traction in the spine by pulling the hips backward and the arms forward. Relax your head while pulling your shoulders back. Engage your core and breathe into your back and hips.



30 seconds
[5–6 breaths],
repeat 3 times

Kakasana Crow Pose

Maintain a deep squat and slide your elbows back to connect with your inner knees. Make sure your hands are shoulder-width apart. Lean forward, pressing your hands into the floor. Lift your hips and slide your knees to the backs of the upper arms. Engage your core as you try to lift your feet off the floor. Breathe without straining. Exhale to release back to a squat before repeating.

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30 seconds
[5–6 breaths],
repeat 3 times

Paripurna Navasana Full Boat Pose

Use your core to help you lower to the floor. Ground through your sitting bones and lift your sternum and legs, maintaining a long spine. Don't round your back to get your legs higher. Extend your arms alongside your legs, palms facing each other, and press your knees together. Point your toes and soften your neck and tongue. Exhale to bring your feet to the floor before repeating.



1 minute
[10–12 breaths]
each side

Ardha Matsyendrasana Half Lord of the Fishes Pose

Lower your legs so your right knee is pointing forward and your left foot is near your right hip. Exhale to ground down, and inhale to create space between your vertebrae and lift the crown of your head. On an exhalation, twist to the left, hooking the right elbow to the outside of your left knee. Press your left hand into the floor. Breathe into the right side of your chest. Repeat on the other side.



5 minutes

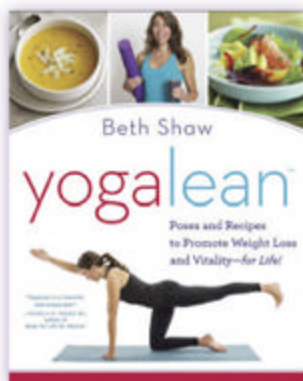
Supta Baddha Konasana Reclining Bound Angle Pose

Bring the soles of your feet to touch and let your knees fall open. Gently lower to the floor and extend your arms by your sides, palms facing up. In this pose, don't push the floor away. In fact, do the opposite: Let go and surrender. Soften your face, shoulders, hips, and heart. Breathe into your belly, and with every exhalation, commit to living in this world with more awareness.

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what's ON TAP

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Soup's on!

Recipes by Charity Ferreira

Chilly nights call for hot and hearty chowder. And with a few simple ingredient swaps, you can make a pot to satisfy everyone at the table.

PESCETARIAN

smoked-salmon chowder with corn and fennel

MAKES 6 CUPS; SERVES 4

Hot-smoked salmon is fully cooked and sold in fillets in the refrigerated section of many supermarkets. Do not substitute cold-smoked salmon like lox.

- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup diced fennel (half a medium bulb)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb red potatoes (skin on), diced
- 3 cups fish stock or water
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp smoked paprika
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb hot-smoked salmon

In a pan over medium-low heat, sauté onion and fennel in oil until soft, 8 minutes. Season with salt. Stir in potatoes and fish stock or water. Cover and simmer until potatoes are tender, 15 minutes. Add milk, corn, and paprika, then simmer uncovered, 5 minutes. Crumble in the smoked salmon; season with salt and black pepper to taste. Divide among four bowls.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 335 calories per serving, 11 g fat (3 g saturated), 34 g carbs, 4 g fiber, 27 g protein, 624 mg sodium

VEGETARIAN

sweet potato, corn, and cheddar chowder

MAKES 6 CUPS; SERVES 4

Place a lid or clean kitchen towel over the top of your blender when puréeing warm liquids to prevent splattering.

- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried thyme
- 2 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded white-cheddar cheese

In a pan over medium-low heat, sauté onion in oil until soft, 8 minutes. Season with salt. Stir in sweet potatoes, thyme, and 3 cups water. Cover and simmer until potatoes are tender, 15 minutes. Add corn and milk; bring to a simmer and cook uncovered, 5 minutes. Remove 2 cups of soup and let cool, 10 minutes; purée in a blender or food processor and return to pot. Season with salt and black pepper. Divide among four bowls; serve topped with cheddar cheese.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 294 calories per serving, 10 g fat (4 g saturated), 42 g carbs, 5 g fiber, 12 g protein, 186 mg sodium

VEGAN

coconut-corn chowder with red curry and baby bok choy

MAKES 6 CUPS; SERVES 4

This is a brothy, fresh-tasting soup. You can substitute other greens for the bok choy, if you like.

- 2 shallots, diced
- 1 small red bell pepper, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 3 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 1 lb baby bok choy, chopped
- 1 14-oz can lite coconut milk
- 2 tsp red curry paste
- Juice of 1 lime

In a pan over medium heat, sauté shallots and bell pepper in oil until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt. Stir in corn, bok choy, and 2 cups water. Simmer uncovered, 3 minutes. Add coconut milk and simmer until broth thickens a little, 5 minutes. In a bowl, combine a spoonful of broth with the red curry paste; stir into soup. Add lime juice and salt to taste; divide among four bowls.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 230 calories per serving, 11 g fat (7 g saturated), 30 g carbs, 5 g fiber, 7 g protein, 271 mg sodium



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savor life's

By Kerri-Ann Jennings, RD • Photography by Aaron Colussi

sweetness

How a dietitian's quest to nix sugar helped change the way she looked at food.

I'M SITTING DOWN TO WRITE this article and I want a sweet treat. So I make myself hot cocoa, but whereas I usually sweeten my cup with a tablespoon of chocolate chips, this time I add none and hope the natural sweetness of milk, vanilla, and cinnamon and the richness of a swirl of heavy cream are enough to tame the bitter cocoa powder. It's actually delicious.

When *Yoga Journal* asked me if I would give up all added sugars for 10 days, a petrified voice inside screamed, "No!" I love to bake, and I generally have some sort of cookie, scone, or muffin daily ... OK, sometimes twice daily. The way I eat, no food is taboo—so ice cream and donuts find their place alongside kale and quinoa. But I was also curious to see how much added sugar my laissez-faire attitude was letting into my body and just how difficult it would be to go without.

Turns out, eliminating sugar isn't as simple as cutting out cake, cookies, and other sweet treats. "Many people tell me they don't eat sugar, but they don't realize there are so many foods that contain sugar, including some that seem healthy," says Nicole Avena, PhD, assistant professor of pharmacology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and co-author of *Why Diets Fail*. "You can't go to a restaurant and order spaghetti and meatballs and think that you're having zero sugar, because there's a lot of added sugar in that meal."

To start, let's clear up the difference between natural and added sugars. Natural sugars are those that occur naturally in whole foods (such as lactose in milk and plain yogurt, and fructose in apples and other fruit). They exist in tandem with other nutrients like protein (in dairy products) and fiber (in fruit), which help slow how quickly your body absorbs the sugar. Added sugars are added to foods when they're processed or prepared. They go by lots of names—sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, agave, molasses, dextrose, and about 50 other pseudonyms—and they're often found where you least expect them, even in foods that don't taste sweet. On my first day of sleuthing, I was surprised to find that even salty pita chips and Greek-yogurt spinach dip had added sugar.

There are several reasons sugar is added to foods, the most obvious being that it tastes good and keeps us coming back for more. "We have this biological propensity to like things that taste sweet," says Avena. "When we were hunters and gatherers, we could tell if a food was safe to eat because it was sweet." Sugar is also added to some foods to mask the taste of other ingredients, such as fillers and dyes, or as a preservative.

It is in fact sugar's sneaky ubiquity that's causing us to eat too much of the stuff. The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugars to 6 teaspoons daily for women, 9 for men. Those amounts are far less than we consume on average—a woman typically takes in 15 teaspoons daily, and a man has 21 teaspoons. Annually, that adds up to 51 pounds of sugar for a woman, 71 pounds for a man.

Added sugars are linked to a host of health problems, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, inflammation, and gum disease. And consuming added sugars raises the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease. Studies have found that fructose (one of the two components of table sugar) can lead to high blood pressure, a main culprit in heart disease.

5 SMART TIPS FOR EATING LESS SUGAR

1 BE LABEL CONSCIOUS

To cut out as many added sugars as possible, it is important to read the entire ingredients list to sleuth out sugar in all its guises.

2 PLAN AHEAD

Going to a friend's house for dinner? Offer to bring a sugar-free dessert so you don't feel singled out for skipping the last course.

3 INDULGE (WITHIN REASON)

If you adopt a strategy of eating as little added sugar as possible, then you can truly enjoy the occasional piece of cake or cookie without guilt. And as you eat less sugar, you might even find that you no longer need as much to satisfy your sweet tooth.

4 SAVOR OTHER FOODS

There's a wide world of delicious food out there that doesn't have added sugars. Discover foods with textures and richness that satisfy without being sweet.

5 TAP INTO YOUR TRUE CRAVINGS

Sometimes we eat because we're bored, stressed, or sad. While food might seem like a quick fix for these negative emotions, ask yourself what you *really* need in the moment. Maybe it's some "you" time (a bath, a massage, a yoga class), taking a moment to connect with a good friend, or just a fun and mood-boosting distraction.

The fact that excess sugar is bad for us isn't news, and it should be enough incentive to make us quit. Trouble is, sugar may be addictive, which explains why it can be hard to stop consuming it. For instance, researchers who tracked brain activity in high-school students as they drank chocolate milkshakes found that high-sugar shakes stimulated pleasure centers in the brain that play a role in compulsive eating.

For me, the hardest part of forgoing added sugars was feeling like I was missing shared food experiences. Halfway through the challenge, my sister had a birthday. I made her a chocolate layer cake. The candles were blown out, slices were passed, and I had no plate in front of me. I felt left out.

But as the days went on, I was able to satisfy cravings with nonsugary foods: sweet raspberries bathed in heavy cream, or a salty Caesar salad. My baking habit presented new challenges, but I found that I could create a satisfying cheesecake by using a date purée in place of sugar.

By the end of the 10-day challenge, I realized that when I do eat sugar, I should do it more intentionally. And although I didn't miss traditional baked goods as much as I thought I would, I confess: I awoke on the eleventh morning with delight at the thought of visiting my local bakery for a croissant.

Kerri-Ann Jennings is a registered dietitian, yoga teacher, and freelance health writer based in Burlington, Vermont.



hazelnut fig crisps

SERVES 16

Seeds, nuts, and dried fruit make these special crackers a hearty addition to a cheese plate. The flavors are a perfect complement to blue cheese.

- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1½ tsp cinnamon
- ¾ tsp salt
- ½ tsp finely ground black pepper
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ½ cup fig purée (see recipe below)
- 1 cup chopped dried figs
- 1 cup chopped hazelnuts
- ¼ cup sesame seeds
- Vegetable-oil cooking spray

Heat oven to 350°F.

In a bowl, stir together the flours, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, and pepper. Add the buttermilk and fig purée, and lightly stir. Add the figs, hazelnuts, and sesame seeds and stir until just blended.

Pour the batter into an 8-by-8-inch square pan coated with cooking spray. Bake until golden and springy to the touch, 35 minutes. Remove from the pan and cool completely on a wire rack.

Slice the crackers into very thin 2-inch squares. Carefully place squares in a single layer on two cookie sheets lined with parchment paper. Reduce the oven heat to 300°F and bake crackers, flipping once, until crisp and deep golden, 33 minutes.

FIG PURÉE

- 1 cup dried figs
- 6 tbsp water
- 1 tsp vanilla

In a food processor, process figs, water, and vanilla until smooth. Makes about 1½ cups.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 163 calories per serving, 6 g fat (1 g saturated), 23 g carbs, 4 g fiber, 5 g protein, 288 mg sodium

Turn the page for more sugar-free recipes. »

savory spring muffins

MAKES 12 MUFFINS

These satisfying, vegetable-studded muffins are a perfect to-go meal. Butter enriches the batter, and a hint of cornmeal gives them a toothsome texture. Bake extras to pop in the freezer—they'll be ready whenever you crave a savory snack.

- ½ cup asparagus, cut into ½-inch strips
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1¾ cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- ¼ cup cornmeal
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- 1 large egg
- ¾ cup skim or 1 percent milk
- ½ cup frozen peas
- ½ cup fresh herbs, minced
- 3 oz soft, mild goat cheese

Heat oven to 400°F. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners. In a bowl, toss asparagus with olive oil; roast on a baking sheet, 10 minutes.

In a second bowl, stir together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, and cayenne pepper. In a third bowl, combine butter, egg, and milk. Make a well in the dry ingredients and pour in the milk mixture; stir lightly until combined. Stir in asparagus, peas, and herbs. Fill muffin cups halfway with batter. Drop 1 tsp goat cheese into the center of each muffin; cover goat-cheese dollops with remaining batter. Bake muffins until golden and springy to the touch, 18 minutes.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 147 calories per muffin, 9 g fat (5 g saturated), 14 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 4 g protein, 283 mg sodium



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ricotta cheesecake with fresh fruit

SERVES 10

The delicate flavors of fresh ricotta and lemon shine through in this decadent but sugar-free cheesecake. Puréeing dates with a touch of water provides a bit of sweetness, and since you're using the whole fruit, you're getting its fiber and other nutrients.

- 1½ cups raw almonds
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 4 tbsp melted butter
- 16 oz fresh ricotta, drained
- 8 oz cream cheese, cut into chunks
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup date purée (recipe on page 60)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 cups mixed berries & sliced kiwis

Heat oven to 350°F. Wrap the outside of a 9-inch springform pan with 2¾-inch-high sides in two layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil.

In a food processor, pulse almonds and dates until the mixture is the tex-

ture of fine crumbs. Add butter and pulse until crust binds together. Press crust into the bottom of the springform pan and bake, 10 minutes.

In a clean food processor, blend ricotta, cream cheese, eggs, date purée, vanilla, and zest until smooth. Pour filling over crust and bake in center of oven until filling is golden, puffed, and jiggles slightly in the middle, 45 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack; transfer to the refrigerator and chill until cold and completely set. Slide a knife around the edge of the cheesecake before opening up the springform pan. Transfer cheesecake to a serving plate and decorate the top with raspberries, blueberries, and kiwi slices.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 409 calories per serving, 29 g fat (12 g saturated), 29 g carbs, 6 g fiber, 14 g protein, 179 mg sodium





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strawberry mint sparklers

SERVES 8

Strawberries and mint come together well in this pretty, fizzy drink. It's ideal for serving with brunch or enjoying as a sweet—but not sugary—afternoon pick-me-up.

- 2 cups frozen strawberries, thawed
- 1 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 handful mint leaves
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup date purée (see recipe below)
- 2 quarts seltzer or sparkling water

In a blender or food processor, thoroughly blend strawberries, juice, mint, and date purée. Filter mixture through a fine strainer, reserving liquid. Top $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of strained purée with 1 cup of seltzer.

DATE PURÉE

- 1 cup pitted deglet noor dates
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup hot water

Cover dates with hot water in a bowl. Let soak at least 30 minutes or overnight. Purée in a blender or food processor until smooth.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 63 calories per serving, 0 g fat (0 g saturated), 15 g carbs, 1 g fiber, 0 g protein, 1 mg sodium



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STORY BY HILLARI DOWDLE

POSES BY RAY LONG, MD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK CUMMINGS

mUSCULAR IMBALANCES happen. We all have them, to lesser or greater effect, whether we know it or not. You have chronically tight, overworked muscles in one region of your body, and weak, underworked muscles in another. When you do sense a weakness, it's logical to blame neighboring muscles. (Tight hamstrings? Might be a problem with the quads. Low-back pain? Look to a smooshy core.) But an emerging science within sports medicine suggests it's just not that simple.

"The whole body is connected, and imbalances can have a domino effect," says Ray Long, MD, orthopedic surgeon, sports-medicine specialist, and author of the book series *The Key Muscles of Yoga* and *The Key Poses of Yoga*. "You can have an imbalance that starts in your shoulder and eventually leads to pain in your heel." For the past year, Long has taught yoga workshops that include discussion of two common patterns, or syndromes, of imbalance involving up to 30 muscles across the upper and lower body. Called upper crossed

syndrome (UCS) and lower crossed syndrome (LCS), the imbalances are responsible for most of the shoulder, knee, and back pain yogis experience, he says.

These patterns of imbalance aren't a new discovery. They were first identified by Czech physician and physiotherapist Vladimir Janda, MD, in the late 1970s and further defined by Shirley Sahrmann, PhD, a physical-therapy professor at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, in the early 2000s. Yet they've only gained widespread attention within the US sports-medicine community within the past few years, mostly among physical therapists and exercise specialists. While the potential combinations of muscles that can be involved is incredibly complex, a main culprit of these imbalances is simple and rampant in American culture: sitting for long periods of time with poor posture.

It can all start when you're seated staring at a computer screen, hunching forward, neck craning, shoulders rounding, belly and butt relaxed. In other words,

slouching on the top, slumping on the bottom. Continue this posture pattern day in and day out, and you create muscle imbalances that may lay the framework for injuries, especially chronic ones involving the shoulders and back.

"When you start to understand these imbalances, you start to understand the genius of yoga poses," Long says. "When they're done with proper alignment, you simultaneously stretch the muscles that tend to be tight or overactive and strengthen the muscles that tend to be weak or underactive." But yoga can also reaffirm imbalances if you practice unconsciously—for instance, frequently doing Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose) without counter poses to stretch the chest or without working to build core strength can stress shoulder joints. To get the balance right, turn the page for our simple guide to understanding upper crossed (a.k.a. slouch) syndrome and lower crossed (a.k.a. slump) syndrome, plus how yoga can help halt their progression before they lead to injury.



muscle imbalances in your **upper body**

Picture yourself at your office desk, shoulders hunched, neck craned forward, eyes glued to your computer screen. Your outward appearance of calm concentration belies what's happening inside your body: The muscles that round your shoulders and internally rotate your upper arm bones (subscapularis, teres major, anterior deltoids), the chest muscles that draw the arms and shoulders forward (pectoralis major and minor), the rear and side neck muscles that hold the head forward (levator scapulae, scalenes, sternocleidomastoid, upper trapezius)—they're all getting overworked and may become tight. At the same time, the muscles that externally rotate the upper arm bones (infraspinatus, teres minor, posterior deltoids), the muscles that stabilize the shoulder blades and draw them down the back (serratus anterior, rhomboids, middle and lower trapezius), and the deep-neck flexors (longus capitis, longus colli) are underworked and thus may become weak.

Staying here from 9 to 5, five days a week, in some variation of this position sets you up for physical trouble. Think future neck pain (as your head juts forward to stare at a screen, it puts pressure on neck joints). Or rotator cuff problems, such as rotator cuff syndrome, in which the muscles and tendons of the shoulder get pinched and a small sack of fluid called a bursa becomes inflamed, causing pain. You may even get an eventual rotator cuff tear from the chronic irritation.

Use the four therapeutic poses on page 68 to help lengthen the muscles that tend to be overactive or tight while also strengthening the muscles that tend to be underactive or weak in UCS.

the inside

muscle imbalances in your **lower body**

When you sit in a chair, your hips are flexed and the muscles at the front of the pelvis called the hip flexors (psoas, rectus femoris) are shortened. If you stay this way for long periods of time, day after day, week after week, the psoas becomes chronically shortened. "Muscles adapt to the position they're most often in," Long says. "Your brain tells your muscle to stay where you habitually put it." This tightening of the hip flexors causes an arching of your low back (extension of your lumbar spine) and tightening of a group of muscles that run up your back (erector spinae), which can in turn put pressure on discs and inflame soft tissues of the low back (thoracolumbar fascia), potentially raising your risk for a soft-tissue tear or even a collapsed disc.

story

As you sit with slumped posture, which commonly happens along with slouching your shoulders and UCS, you don't typically use your butt muscles (gluteus maximus, gluteus medius) or abdominal core muscles, so they weaken and offer little support for your back. One of the hip flexors (rectus femoris) is a quadriceps muscle that runs across the hip and the knee and can put uneven pressure on the kneecap when tight. This uneven pressure means that cartilage of the knee rubs against cartilage of the thigh bone (femur), which may lead to cartilage inflammation and front knee pain (a.k.a. anterior knee pain). We label this zone 1 of LCS.

Lower down the body, there is a second region (zone 2 of LCS) that is commonly associated with

slouching and slumping in a chair. If you relax your legs forward and only have a slight bend in your knees with heels touching the floor and toes off the ground yet pointed down, you may tighten up your calf muscles (gastrocnemius, soleus) and thigh muscles (biceps femoris of the hamstring, adductor muscles of the inner thigh), and stretch muscles along your shins (tibialis anterior, tibialis posterior). This may then put added stress on bands of tissue in the heel called plantar fascia and lead to piercing pain in your heel (plantar fasciitis).

Use the four therapeutic poses on page 69 to help lengthen the muscles that tend to be overactive or tight while also strengthening the muscles that tend to be underactive or weak in LCS.



the slouch



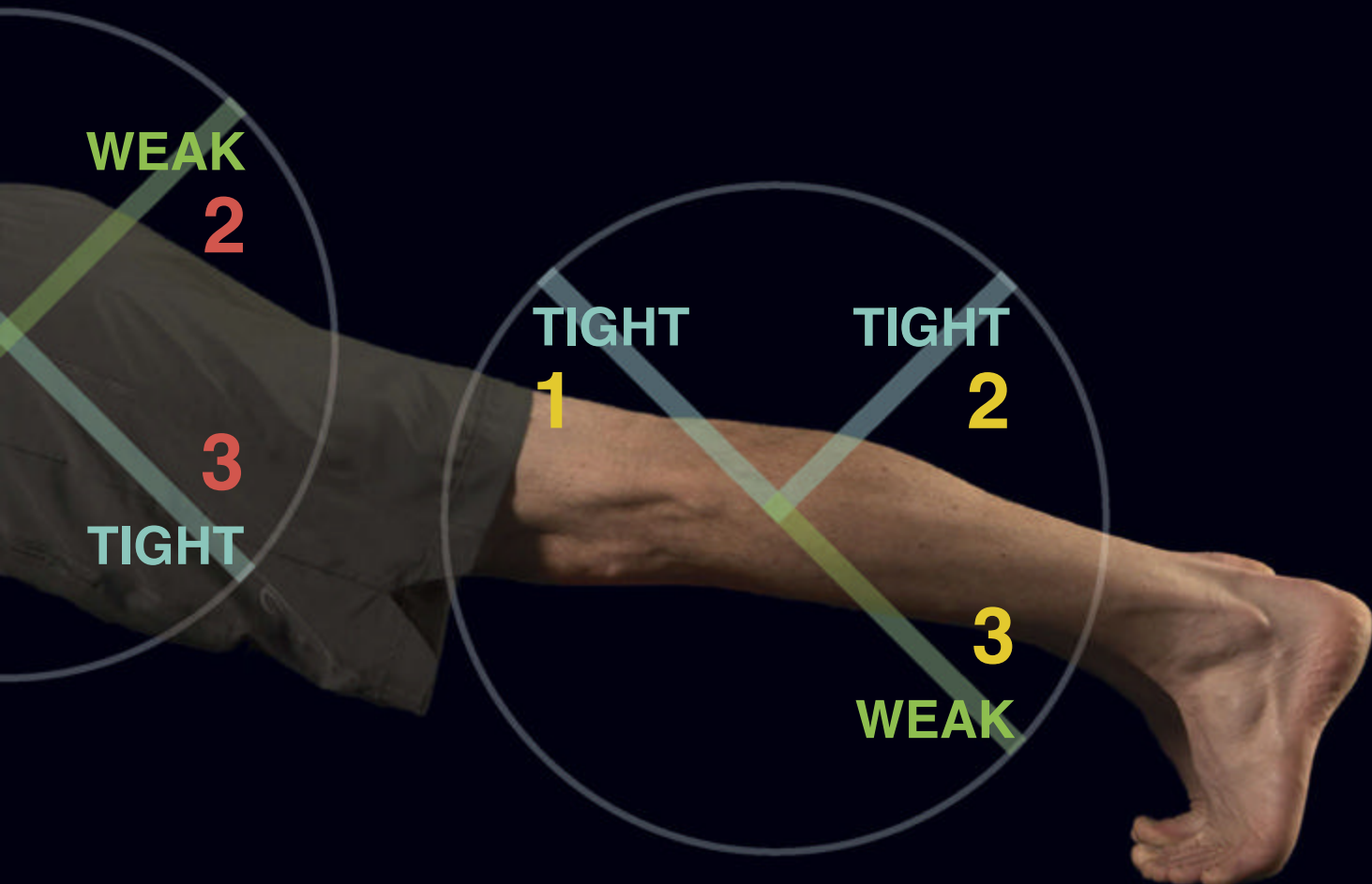
upper crossed syndrome

Imbalance: Tight shoulder, rear-neck, and chest muscles cross with weak deep-neck flexors and midback muscles

Injury Zones: Neck strain and rotator cuff syndrome or rotator cuff tears

Overactive or tight muscles and underactive or weak muscles can include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 TIGHT
 rear neck and side neck
 levator scapulae
 scalenes
 sternocleidomastoid
 upper trapezius
 shoulder internal rotators
 subscapularis
 teres major
 anterior deltoids</p> | <p>2 WEAK
 upper-arm external rotators
 infraspinatus
 posterior deltoids
 teres minor
 shoulder stabilizers
 rhomboids
 serratus anterior
 middle trapezius (along midback)
 lower trapezius (along midback)</p> |
| <p>4 WEAK
 deep-neck flexors
 longus capitis
 longus colli</p> | <p>3 TIGHT
 chest muscles
 pectoralis major
 pectoralis minor</p> |



lower crossed syndrome zone 1

Imbalance: Taut hip flexors and low-back muscles cross with weak butt and ab muscles

Injury Zones: Front-knee pain from uneven pressure on the kneecap, disc problems or soft-tissue inflammation of the low back

Overactive or tight muscles and underactive or weak muscles can include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 TIGHT
deep-back extensors
erector spinae</p> | <p>2 WEAK
butt
gluteus maximus
gluteus medius</p> |
| <p>4 WEAK
abdominals
transversus abdominis
rectus abdominis
internal obliques</p> | <p>3 TIGHT
hip flexors
psoas
rectus femoris</p> |

lower crossed syndrome zone 2

Imbalance: Tight calf and thigh muscles cross with weak muscles along the shins

Injury Zones: Heel pain (plantar fasciitis)

Overactive or tight muscles and underactive or weak muscles can include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 TIGHT
thighs
biceps femoris
(hamstrings)
adductors</p> | <p>2 TIGHT
calves
gastrocnemius
soleus</p> |
| <p>3 WEAK
along shins
tibialis anterior
tibialis posterior</p> | |

poses for upper crossed syndrome



Lying on a Bolster

Lie on a bolster positioned about one-third of the way up your spine, with your shoulders hanging off and rolling outward and the head in a neutral position (you may want to use a folded blanket to support your head). Let your legs fall open as they would in Savasana (Corpse Pose), and stay here for 5 to 15 minutes. It's a passive way of unhunching your shoulders and opening your chest and neck.

Purvottanasana (Upward Plank Pose) Prep

Sit in Dandasana (Staff Pose) with your back straight, legs extended in front of your body. Press your hands down to the sides of the hips. Externally rotate the shoulders and draw your shoulder blades down the back to lengthen the tight muscles of your shoulders, side neck, and chest. Press the mounds at the base of your index fingers into the mat and then externally rotate your shoulders. Hold your hands in place and attempt to drag them away from your body to expand the chest. Prepare as if about to do Purvottanasana (Upward Plank Pose). Keep your knees bent and your butt on the ground; most of the action is in the upper body. This prep pose activates the weakened muscles that stabilize the shoulder blades (rhomboids, middle and lower trapezius) and stretches tight chest muscles. Hold for 8 to 10 breaths; release. Repeat up to 3 times.



Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose) Arms

Sitting in Sukhasana (Easy Pose) with your legs crossed, extend your right arm next to your right ear and your left arm down close to your left side. Bend the left arm across the back and up so that the fingers are reaching the mid-back between the shoulder blades. Bend the right elbow so your fingers reach toward your left fingers. If possible, allow the fingers to connect; if not, use a strap. Then lightly pull. Stay in the posture for 8 to 10 breaths; repeat on the other side. The opening in the upper arm stretches muscles deep within the shoulders that are often tight, such as the subscapularis, and strengthens shoulder muscles that may be weak, such as the infraspinatus.



Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II)

Stand on your mat with your feet positioned 3 to 4 feet apart, the back foot turned in about 30 degrees. Raise your arms overhead, then lower them to shoulder height as you bend the front leg to a 90-degree angle, keeping the hips square to the long edge of the mat. As you move your arms, feel your shoulder blades moving toward the midline and down your back, which strengthens the rhomboids and the middle and lower trapezius, and your chest expanding forward and opening completely to stretch the pectoralis major and minor. Imagine pressing the mounds at the base of the index fingers down against an immovable object, as you simultaneously externally rotate the shoulders. Stay here for 8 to 10 breaths; repeat on the other side.



poses for lower crossed syndrome



Utthita Trikonasana (Triangle Pose) Variation

From Warrior II, straighten your front leg. Raise your rear arm straight up and extend your front arm toward the floor. Don't force the stretch of the side body; if you feel stiff, place your lower hand on a block. Press the ball of the back foot down first, then press the same foot's outside edge down to stretch tight calf muscles and contract weak muscles along the shin involved in LCS zone 2. Keep simultaneously pressing the ball and outer edges of the foot into the mat; you should feel your arch rise slightly. Expand the chest by drawing your shoulder blades toward your spine and away from your ears to also stretch and engage the muscles involved in UCS. Stay in the pose for 8 to 10 breaths; repeat on the other side.

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)

Start on your hands and knees, pressing through the palms equally as you extend the legs, moving your heels toward the floor. Once in the pose, contract the quads and attempt to lift the tops of your feet toward your shins. This activates one muscle along the shin (tibialis anterior) and helps stretch tight calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus) of LCS zone 2. Hold for up to 1 minute; repeat 5 times.



Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) Presses

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet on the floor. Engage the hips' internal rotators before raising the pelvis by pressing your soles into the mat and attempting to drag them apart, allowing the thighs to roll inward. Maintain this action and then engage the glutes to lift the pelvis. Place your arms with palms up alongside your trunk or clasp your hands behind your back for a deeper stretch of UCS muscles. Contract your glutes to build strength in them while you're stretching the psoas (deep-hip flexor) of LCS zone 1. If your hands are at your sides, do this sequence of muscular engagement, lifting up on exhalation and lowering down on inhalation, 10 to 15 times. If your hands are clasped, hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Rest and repeat 2 times.



Plank Pose on Forearms

From a standard Plank Pose—lifting onto toes, arms under shoulders, back straight, abdominals lifted—lower onto your forearms so they're parallel to the outer edges of the mat. Your upper arms should be perpendicular to the floor, with elbows below shoulders. Make two fists, turning your knuckles out toward the edge of your mat. Imagine that your ab muscles are a corset and you're tightening its laces, which will engage the deep-core muscles (transverse abdominis) of LCS zone 1. At the same time, fix your elbows onto your mat and gently attempt to drag them toward your feet as you contract your glutes. Let the drag of your elbows activate and strengthen the exterior abs, or "six pack" muscles (rectus abdominis), and the ab muscles that stabilize you in sideward movements (internal obliques). Begin by holding for 10 seconds for several reps. With practice, build up to holding for 1 minute, and eventually 2 minutes. 🧘



OUR PROS Teacher **Ray Long, MD**, is an orthopedic surgeon and founder of Bandha Yoga. Model **Raj Seymour** teaches classes at CorePower Yoga, as well as AcroYoga classes at Amana Yoga studio in Boulder, Colorado. Writer **Hillari Dowdle**, the poster child for upper crossed syndrome, lives and writes in Knoxville, Tennessee.



You know meditation and a more mindful approach to life are good for your brain, body, and soul. Yet the harder you try to quiet those noisy, stress-laden thoughts, the louder they scream. Or maybe the notion seems so impossible, you don't even try. Sound familiar? Our mindfulness-meditation guide can help you get around roadblocks and on the path to contentment.

BY AMANDA MASCARELLI

So you think

Y

YOU'RE STRESSED, your mind a traffic jam of urgent tasks and demands competing for your attention. Sure, meditation could be just what you need right now. But who has time? Whether you do or not, you must find it: A rapidly growing body of literature suggests that you can't afford not to meditate, for your health and your sanity. CEOs, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, physicians, parents—stressed-out folks of all kinds—are discovering that the keys to productivity, efficiency, and stress relief can be found in sitting still and becoming aware of how your mind works. And research shows that meditation can help restructure the brain in ways that lead to better concentration, boosted immunity, and greater compassion. So no more excuses for why you can't get started, or, if you already come to your meditation cushion regularly, why you can't seem to take it to the next level.

For many of us, the noise and tension inside our minds, in addition to a packed schedule, feel like insurmountable obstacles to meditation. But experts say that tuning in to your busy thoughts is actually a perfect place to start. The struggle to focus is integral to the training process of learning how to regulate one's emotions and find a sense of detachment, which can help coax you into the present moment and keep you there, as well as develop better coping

mechanisms, says Fadel Zeidan, PhD, a cognitive neuroscientist at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, who studies mindfulness meditation. "It's all about cultivating that awareness first," he says.

And if you've already dabbled in meditation, you know awareness is just the beginning. "The subconscious mind has many layers, and penetrating those layers is one of the most exciting aspects of deep meditation," says Madhav Goyal, MD, an assistant professor of general internal medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, who has studied the health effects of meditation. The longer you spend in meditation sessions, the more insight and wisdom you gain, says Goyal, a devoted meditator himself.

There are dozens of techniques for finding contentment and tranquility, but mindfulness—a 21st-century Western adaptation of the ancient Buddhist practice of meditation—is particularly appealing because it can be tapped throughout the day, especially during stressful situations. This form of meditation emphasizes using the breath to stay present in the moment, and, unlike some others forms of meditation, nonjudgmentally recognizing your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they occur. The departure point between classical mindfulness meditation, which can be traced back to Buddhist teach-

ings some 2,600 years ago, and mindfulness meditation now practiced in the West is the role of judgment, says John Dunne, PhD, an associate professor in the department of religion at Emory University. Classical mindfulness meditation labels certain thoughts as "nonvirtuous" and seeks to abandon them. When practicing mindfulness, "You're trying to recognize that the nature of experience is mind itself," says Dunne. "For that reason, you are not trying to judge it as good or bad."

Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, and creator of the most popular form of mindfulness meditation in the United States, known as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), adds: "Mindfulness is not really about sitting in Full Lotus, pretending you're a statue in the British Museum. It's about living your life as if it really mattered, moment by moment by moment by moment."

And it is not just for type A CEOs, traders, and venture capitalists looking for fast-tracked success. It is a rich practice that can be as simple or complex as you want it to be—a tactic for being productive at work, more present in your relationships, or moving closer toward enlightenment. Read on for more about the benefits of mindfulness meditation and expert advice from veteran teachers on how to move past roadblocks and into peace of mind.

you can't
meditate...

No more excuses...

I don't have time, and I don't know how.

Wisdom: Even short stints of meditation can be transformative. Just five minutes a day can yield noticeable results, including stress reduction and increased focus, says meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg. Her advice: Start by carving out time each day. Sit comfortably in a quiet space, on the floor, on cushions, or on a chair, with your spine erect but not strained or overarched. If necessary, lie down—you don't have to sit. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, feeling the air as it enters your nostrils, fills your chest and abdomen, and releases. Then let your attention rest on your natural rhythm of breathing. If your mind wanders, don't be concerned. Notice whatever has captured your attention, then let go of those thoughts or feelings and return your awareness to your breath. If you practice like this for a dedicated period each day, you'll eventually be able to call on mindfulness in any situation.

My mind is too scattered...

...I won't get anything out of it.

Wisdom: Let go of preconceived notions and expectations.

Expectations lead to emotions that act as blocks and distractions—so try not to have any, says Zeidan: “Don’t expect to experience bliss. Don’t even expect to feel better. Just say, ‘I’m going to dedicate the next 5 to 20 minutes to meditation.’” During meditation, as feelings arise—annoyance, boredom, even happiness—let go of them because they’re distractors from the present moment, Zeidan says, adding, “You’re becoming attached to that emotional feeling whether it’s positive or negative. The idea is to stay neutral, objective.” Simply return to the changing sensations of your breath and realize that awareness of your busy mind is part of the practice.

I'm afraid to be alone with my thoughts.

Wisdom: Meditation can free you from the very thoughts you're trying to avoid. Jack Kornfield, an author and teacher now based at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, writes in *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology*: “Unhealthy thoughts can chain us to the past. We can, however, change our destructive thoughts in the present. Through mindfulness training we can recognize them as bad habits learned long ago. Then we can take the critical next step. We can discover how these obsessive thoughts cover our grief, insecurity, and loneliness. As we gradually learn to tolerate these underlying energies, we can reduce their pull. Fear can be transformed into presence and excitement. Confusion can open up into interest. Uncertainty can become a gateway to surprise. And unworthiness can lead us to dignity.”

I'm not doing it “right.”

Wisdom: There is no “right” way. Kabat-Zinn wisely wrote in his book *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*: “There is really and truly no one ‘right way’ to practice. It is best to encounter each moment with freshness. We look deeply into it, and then we let go into the next moment, not holding to the last one. There is much to be seen and understood along this path; but it can’t be forced. It is best to hold to and honor one’s own direct experience, and not worry too much about whether this is what you are supposed to feel or see or think about. If you practice this kind of trust in the face of insecurity and the strong habit of wanting some authority to anoint your experience with his/her blessing, you will find that something of a deepening nature does happen along the path.”

I don't have enough discipline to stick with it.

Wisdom: Make meditation a part of your routine, like showering or brushing your teeth.

Once you carve out time for meditation (see “I don’t have time ...,” above), you still have to get past mistaken assumptions and unrealistic expectations about the practice, self-judgment, and—as with exercise—a tendency to quit. To hone discipline, Goyal says he works to put meditation on par with bathing or eating: “We are all pressed for time. Make meditation a high priority so it gets done daily.” Still, life situations sometimes get in the way. When lapses of a week or more occur, make the effort to continue with it regularly afterward, he says. The first few days, it may (or may not) be more difficult to meditate. Just as you don’t expect to run 10 miles after a long hiatus in your jogging routine, don’t come to meditation with expectations, says Goyal.

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The Right Path

Sorting through meditation styles can be a lot like sifting through yoga-class schedules when you are a new practitioner. “Especially in the West, meditation practices get mixed and hybrids emerge,” explains Dunne. (Think: Hot Vinyasa Flow, Power Yin, Ashtanga-inspired, etc.) Even in India, the birthplace of meditation, there isn’t just one word for the practice, says Dunne. On a fundamental level, all meditation aims to consciously cultivate the mind, but not all styles are right for everyone. If a mindfulness practice doesn’t resonate with you, here are some other common techniques that may be more suited to your personality and point in life.

To begin: Broadly defined, “mindfulness” refers to any practice in which you concentrate and try to remain aware of your experience moment to moment. That experience is anchored by an object (like the breath), a sensation (like walking), a sound, a visual, or more, and ultimately aims to cultivate mental stability. Some of the following styles of meditation relate to mindfulness, some take the practice further—to a deep level of inquiry—and some rely on different techniques like using an object or manipulating the breath to change your state of consciousness. Like mindfulness, some are rooted in Buddhist tradition, while others stem from a lineage of Hindu meditation practices.

If you are ready for enlightenment ...

try vipassana: This Sanskrit word essentially means “insight.” It refers to a variety of meditation techniques that help the practitioner access a deeper level of consciousness, see “reality,” and experience impermanence. In classical vipassana, a 2,500-year-old Buddhist tradition, you first focus on breath awareness. Insight may come naturally, once you’ve calmed the mind, or you can add advanced techniques that involve dissecting arguments and concepts, and using props.

If you want to practice at your desk ...

try Dzogchen: This is a form of Tantric meditation that asks you to be aware of everything, meaning it is “object-less” or “non-dual.” You practice with the eyes open and avoid labeling thoughts, feelings, or sensations.

If you need to find forgiveness ...

try lovingkindness meditation: Popular in the West, this practice is similar to some Tibetan traditions around developing compassion, but is essentially a relatively new form of meditation. You repeat a mantra related to freedom from fear and suffering, shifting your intention to different people in your life and yourself.

If you want an out-of-body experience ...

try Transcendental Meditation: A form of Hindu meditation, or Vedanta, the goal is to ... transcend, or rise above all that is impermanent. While in a seated meditation pose, you focus on a mantra and actively change the breath in order to alter your state of mind.

If you are looking for more energy ...

try Kundalini meditation: Kundalini is a yoga practice, but also a philosophy and the name of energy in Tantric yoga practices and Hindu spiritual practices. This energy rises through the chakras, from the base of your spine to the crown of your head and onward. In Kundalini meditation, you are using your breath to move energy upward in an effort to change your state of mind, while also waiting for that moment when energy is reduced to a simple, pure form, similar to when you sleep, orgasm, or die.

If you have trouble sitting still ...

try qi gong: Similar to Kundalini, qi gong is a Taoist method of meditation that uses the breath to circulate energy through the body, and eventually alter consciousness.

If you need rules and guidelines ...

try zazen: A very exacting Zen practice with prescriptions for how to maintain the eyes, hands, and posture, zazen is a non-dual practice that means simply to sit, as the Buddha did thousands of years ago. You sit, without a focus on an object, until your innate ability to see reality emerges.

Amanda Mascarelli is a freelance science and health writer based in Denver. Her work has appeared in *Nature*, *Science*, *The Washington Post*, *Audubon*, and more. She’s hoping a mindfulness-meditation course can help her navigate the daily pressures of her writing career and raise three children more gracefully and with less stress.

This is your brain (and body) on meditation

A slew of scientific studies suggest that mindfulness meditation offers some powerful holistic health benefits. And while researchers caution that no one study should be interpreted as a prescription for treatment, mindfulness is increasingly being considered a viable complement to conventional health care. Here are just some of the ways it can help you:



STAY FOCUSED

Learning to sustain one's attention through mindfulness seems to improve overall ability to focus and maintain attention during everyday tasks. In a 2012 study in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, researchers evaluated individuals with no previous exposure to meditation. Some of them received three hours of mindfulness-meditation training and were asked to meditate for 10 minutes each day for up to 16 weeks. During tasks that involved attention to detail, those who meditated showed more control over executive functions involving attention than nonmeditators. The research suggests that even "low doses" of meditation training can significantly change neural function related to processing conflicting stimuli.

REDUCE STRESS

Research suggests that mindfulness-meditation training not only reduces stress and anxiety following a stressful episode, but that practicing it can actually help mitigate stress in the moment. In a 2013 study, Kirk Warren Brown, PhD, a psychologist at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, and colleagues reported that mindful individuals showed lower brain arousal in response to highly unpleasant images compared with controls. This suggests that mindfulness changes how stress-related emotion centers in the brain are activated. As a result, not only do these brain areas get less active when provoked, but the reaction may be easier to regulate because it's not so strong, says Brown.

MANAGE ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

In a 2014 meta-analysis, Goyal and his partners at Johns Hopkins found that mindfulness meditation might be on par with antidepressants in treating depressive symptoms. In a 2014 study in the journal *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, researchers examined 15 participants with no prior meditation experience. Over the course of just four days of mindfulness-meditation training, participants experienced significantly less anxiety. Essentially, mindfulness meditation reduces anxiety by improving mood and enhancing cognitive control mechanisms.

EASE PAIN

In a 2011 study, Wake Forest researcher Zeidan and his colleagues showed that after just four days of mindfulness-meditation training, meditating during episodes of pain reduced the unpleasantness by 57 percent and participants' pain-intensity ratings by 40 percent. The researchers also identified specific brain regions that appear to be involved in the experience of pain and how it is modulated through meditation. By altering the context for pain via cognitive control and emotional regulation, meditation may change the way we perceive pain (i.e., viewing it as fleeting).


BOOST GRAY MATTER

By spurring the growth of gray matter in various brain regions, mindfulness may improve learning, memory, and emotional regulation, several studies over the last decade have shown. In a 2011 study published in the journal *Psychiatry Research*, for instance, researchers scanned the brains of participants who had little or no previous experience with mindfulness training. The study participants then completed an eight-week MBSR course, and researchers scanned their brains again. Individuals who took the meditation course showed significant increases in gray matter.

AVOID COLDS AND FLU

Mindfulness meditation may help boost immune function. In a 2012 *Annals of Family Medicine* study of adults aged 50 or older, researchers showed that mindfulness meditation is about as effective as exercise for reducing the occurrence of acute respiratory infection, which includes colds and seasonal flu. This bolstered previous studies which showed that mindfulness meditation can help fight illness by reducing stress and therefore helping to support a healthy immune response.

FIGHT ALZHEIMER'S

Mindfulness might slow the brain degeneration that leads to Alzheimer's disease. In a pilot study published in 2013, Rebecca Erwin Wells, MD, at Wake Forest and her colleagues reported that in adults with mild cognitive impairment (a transitional stage between normal aging-related memory loss and full-blown dementia), participants who practiced mindfulness meditation showed less atrophy, or shrinking, in the hippocampus, a brain region that is altered in neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's, compared to the control group. The study also revealed that an area of the brain called the default mode network, which is involved in activities like daydreaming and thinking about the past and the future, shows greater neural connectivity in meditators than nonmeditators. Larger studies are still needed to confirm these early-but-promising results, says Erwin Wells. 

Tools of the trade

Just as with learning any new skill, it pays to have guidance and support. Here are our favorite guides, props, and online classes for finding your moment of Zen.



How to Sit; How to Love; How to Eat, by Thich Nhat Hanh

These pocket collections of wisdom from one of the world's most popular Buddhist teachers help bring mindfulness into everyday life. \$10 each, parallax.org



Love My Mat Sitting Pretty Pillow

Ease your hips and back into a seated meditation practice with support from a handmade meditation cushion, crafted from buckwheat hulls and reclaimed fabric. \$60, lovemyamat.com



Muse Brain Sensing Headband

For those who need a tech aid, this brain-wave monitor and accompanying app can sense when you are agitated and help you calm down. \$299, choosemuse.com

Guided Mindfulness Meditation Practices with Jon Kabat-Zinn

Work your way through the MBSR curriculum or venture into shorter guided meditations with CDs or MP3s. \$20 each, mindfulnesscds.com (not pictured)

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) Meditation Classes

Dedicated to mindfulness education, MARC offers free six-week online courses in how to start and grow a mindfulness practice. Free, marc.ucla.edu (not pictured)

The burgeoning field of nutritional psychiatry is revealing that what you eat matters greatly to your mental health. Learn how to enhance the mood-boosting benefits of your yoga practice with the right diet.

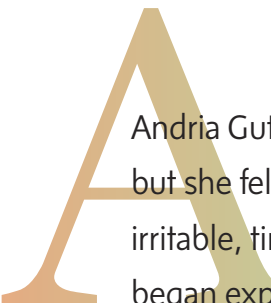


EAT YOUR



WAY HAPPY

BY SUNNY SEA GOLD • PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON COLUSSI



Andria Gutierrez was only 27 years old, but she felt more like 80: mentally fuzzy, irritable, tired all the time. And then Andria began experiencing bouts of overwhelming anxiety that became more and more frequent. Andria was diagnosed with anxiety disorder, but the medications her doctors prescribed gave her little relief, so she went looking for help elsewhere.

“I talked to a few naturopaths, and they all suggested I try changes in my diet,” Andria says. Three months later, still fighting anxiety, fatigue, and brain fog, she finally decided to make major changes to her eating habits. She dropped sugar, red meat, and refined grains and switched to a more Mediterranean style of eating focused on fruits, veggies, and fish. She started noticing improvements in a matter of weeks—and now, three years later, “I have never felt better; the anxiety and depression are completely gone,” Andria says. “I had never felt comfortable and content with my life before, and now I do.”

Eastern-medicine practitioners and naturopaths have been prescribing dietary changes to help ease mental and physical ailments for millennia, says internist Eva Selhub, MD, a lecturer in medicine at Harvard Medical School and a clinical associate in medicine at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. Now Western science is catching on, and a growing body of research suggests that the foods we eat greatly affect our brains and mental health. In fact, so much good evidence is emerging that a brand-new focus of mental-health research and treatment has been born: *nutritional psychiatry*.

“For the last several decades, there was this idea in psychiatry that the mind was separate from the body—that psychiatric illnesses like depression existed in the mind alone, so what you put in your body was largely irrelevant,” says Felice Jacka, PhD, an associate professor at the Deakin University School of Medicine in Melbourne, Australia, who focuses mainly on nutritional psychiatry. “But research over the last 10 years has increasingly shown us that physical and mental health are part of the whole and can’t be separated.”

For instance, in one study of several hundred Australian women, those who ate the most whole foods like fruits, veggies, unprocessed meats, and whole grains were less likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder than those who had a low intake of healthy food. Two large

studies later done in Norway and another here in the United States discovered much the same thing.

While it’s true that people who are mentally ill or feeling unwell may gravitate toward less-healthy “comfort” or convenience foods, that doesn’t fully explain the connection, says Jacka. Profound changes in brain structure and behavior have been seen after manipulating diets in animal studies; researchers like Jacka are in the process of investigating how this applies to humans.

So far, the strongest correlations in nutritional psychiatry have been found in the risk of depression, but evidence also suggests that food may play a role in conditions like anxiety disorders, dementia, schizophrenia, and attention deficit disorder. “With every patient I see now, I do a complete food assessment and try to make food choices a part of their treatment plan,” says Drew Ramsey, MD, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University in New York City and co-author of *The Happiness Diet*. “One patient I remember—a young guy who was really struggling with depression and anxiety—his diet was very unstructured; he skipped meals a lot, ate a lot of white carbs and almost no vegetables.” After a year of treatment, part of which included adding lots of vegetables, seafood, and whole-food smoothies to the patient’s daily meals, “His depression was in complete remission and he was no longer on any medications,” says Ramsey. “I remember him telling me, ‘If I don’t eat right, I don’t feel right.’” (Of course, diet should be just one part of your treatment plan—never stop medication without your doctor’s guidance.)

HOW FOOD AFFECTS MOOD

Like any other body part, our brains are basically built out of the food we eat. “Emotions begin in biology, with two nerve cells rubbing together, and those nerve cells are made of nutrients in food,” explains Ramsey. Your body can’t make the mood-regulating neurotransmitter serotonin without iron and tryptophan, he points out, or produce myelin, the fatty substance that insulates your brain cells, without vitamin B12 (found in seafood, beef, and dairy).

It makes sense that giving your body higher-quality fuel makes it work better head to toe, but research suggests some other fascinating specifics about how food exerts influence over your state of mind. For example, rats fed a high-fat, refined-sugar diet show reduced amounts of growth factors called neurotrophins in the brain, and scientists suspect that something similar happens to sugar-loving humans. And that’s a problem because neurotrophins prompt the growth of new brain cells in the hippocampus, a part of the brain that’s key for memory, explains Jacka.

It’s also been noted that the hippocampus is smaller in people with depression, but it grows again when the illness is successfully treated. So it’s possible that eating a less-sugary diet could impact depression at least in part

based on its effect on neurotrophins and the hippocampus.

Oxidative stress on brain cells likely plays a role, too. “Your brain is burning enormous amounts of glucose [blood sugar] for energy, and just like when you burn gas in a car and there is exhaust, when you burn fuel in the brain there’s a type of ‘exhaust’: free radicals,” says Ramsey. “Over time, those free radicals damage your cells—and that’s oxidative stress.” Build up enough damage, and it can affect emotion by interfering with the way your brain cells function. Brain cells and the signals they send to each other are part of what creates emotion and mood. So if the cells are unhealthy and damaged, the signals they send become muddled or irregular, and you end up with disorders like depression and anxiety. Antioxidants like vitamins C, E, and beta carotene, and flavonoids like quercetin and anthocyanidins (found in dark berries), have been shown to help prevent and repair oxidative stress.

The molecules in food also affect our genes through epigenetics. For instance, research suggests that flavonoid antioxidants in things like dark chocolate and certain vegetables, or zinc from oysters, or omega-3 fats actually change the way our genes behave, says Ramsey. So if you have a genetic predisposition to depression, your diet can either increase or decrease your risk of developing the illness.

Bacteria in the gut play a variety of roles for keeping the brain healthy. “We have a very beautiful, wonderful ecosystem of organisms that live in the mucosal areas of the body like the lining of our stomach and intestines,” says Selhub, who studies the link between gut bacteria and mental health. One way these bacteria benefit the brain is by helping to keep intact the gut lining, which is full of nerve cells that constantly send messages to the brain. The gut lining also acts as a barrier to toxins and aids digestion so your brain is protected from bad stuff while still getting needed nutrients. But overwhelm the gut lining with the wrong foods—processed sugars, some cured meats (like deli meats), trans fats, and processed, white-flour carbohydrates—and it can become inflamed and start to break down, says Selhub, adding, “And we know that more inflammation is associated with more mood disorders, including depression.”

Another way gut bacteria seem to aid the brain is by synthesizing many neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine. A 2011 study at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, found that changing the balance of gut bacteria in mice not only changed levels of these chemicals in their brains, but also caused obvious changes in behavior, making usually timid mice act more boldly and adventurously—suggesting a shift in anxiety levels.





LEARN MORE

For bonus mood-lifting recipes, visit yogajournal.com/foodandmood

Although Jacka notes that researchers don't yet understand how gut bacteria affect neurochemicals in the human brain, what is clear is that diet is one of the keys to promoting healthy gut flora. Refined carbohydrates, sugar, and saturated fats upset the balance of bacteria. On the other hand, "prebiotic foods," such as asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, bananas, oatmeal, unrefined wheat, chicory root, and legumes, support gut bacteria and their functions.

The effects of food on our brain may be speedier than you'd expect—days, not years. Andria Gutierrez says she noticed a mental-health upswing after two weeks of following a healthier diet. "My mind just started to feel less cluttered. I started to wake up feeling rested and with a smile," she says. "I can remember that first day I woke up feeling good—it still gives me the chills because it felt like a miracle, a true blessing."

GOOD-MOOD FOOD

The field of nutritional psychiatry is still in its infancy, but research to date suggests that what seems to matter the most is overall diet quality. Here are five ways to improve the caliber of yours.

GET BACK TO BASICS Diets that focus more on whole, unprocessed foods—regardless of whether they include or exclude certain grains, meats, or dairy products—tend to correspond to better mental health than typical "Western" diets full of fast and processed food, cured meats, packaged snacks, and sugary drinks. "The Mediterranean diet and Asian diets would fit that healthier description," says Elizabeth Somer, RD, author of *Eat Your Way to Happiness*. In other words, what experts have been telling us for years remains true: Eat lots of colorful veggies and fruits, lean protein, and whole grains, and very little processed and fatty foods.

EAT MORE FERMENTED STUFF

Fermented foods like kefir, kimchi (Korean fermented cabbage), sauerkraut, miso (Japanese fermented soybean paste), and kombucha (a fermented drink brewed with yeast) contain probiotic bacteria that research suggests make your gut generally

healthier. Some yogurts do, too, but not all, so check labels to make sure they contain “live active cultures” and no sugar. In one 2013 study, UCLA researchers found eating a fermented yogurt with probiotics twice a day for a month led to increased activity in areas of the brain that process emotion and sensation. (How the components of yogurt might specifically affect mood, however, is still unknown.) The scientific jury is still out on exactly which probiotic supplements may work best and which types of bacteria are most beneficial in terms of mental health. But Selhub does recommend increasing your intake of fermented food and thinks that a probiotic supplement can be a good choice for those with anxiety or depression (and she does take a probiotic supplement herself).

AVOID JUNK FOOD Our harried lives lead us to eat more junk and processed convenience foods, which may make us feel even more stressed. “We don’t focus on finding outlets for our stress as a modern society, so our stress overflows and the dam breaks,” says Selhub. When there’s a drop in our levels of dopamine and serotonin—two brain chemicals that improve mood—we seek out high-carb junk foods to try to feel better. “Then the food we eat increases inflammation in our guts, leads to oxidative stress in the brain, and serotonin and dopamine drop again. It creates a vicious cycle,” Selhub says. Taking the time to cook at home even when life feels crazy, or at least selecting healthier prepared meals that are lower in fat and full of vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and fermented foods, will pay off by breaking this damaging cycle and improving your mood.

EAT MORE SEAFOOD Omega-3 fatty acids, specifically the DHA type found in seafood like salmon, tuna, halibut, and shrimp, seem to be helpful to people with severe depression, says Jacka. The membranes of brain cells are partially made from omega-3 fatty acids, so if levels in your diet are low, your brain cells may suffer and not signal each other properly. Exact requirements aren’t known yet, but the data suggest that we need at least 220 mg of DHA per day, the amount you’d get if you ate salmon at least twice a week, says Somer.

FOCUS ON FOODS FULL OF VITAMINS B AND D Depressed patients are often found to be low on vitamins B9 (folate) and B12, leading experts to conclude that these nutrients are important in brain and mental health. Low vitamin D is also linked to depression. “And almost everybody is deficient in D,” says Somer. “You need 1,000 IU a day.” Spinach, black-eyed peas, and asparagus are packed with folate; seafood, beef, and dairy have lots of B12; and D can be found in salmon, tuna, liver, milk, and eggs. 🐟

Sunny Sea Gold is a health journalist and author of the 2011 book *Food: The Good Girl’s Drug*.

your HAPPY DIET cheat sheet

Wondering what to nosh on next? Use this checklist of what to eat and to avoid to keep your brain balanced and firing on all cylinders.

FILL UP ON

- ❑ Oily fish rich in omega-3 fats
- ❑ High-antioxidant veggies like dark, leafy greens
- ❑ Dark, colorful berries
- ❑ Chewy whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and whole-wheat pasta

STAY AWAY FROM

- ❑ Fried foods containing saturated and trans fats
- ❑ Processed simple carbs like white-flour breads and crackers
- ❑ Sweets and candy
- ❑ Artificial sweeteners, which some research suggests may negatively affect gut bacteria

Source: Elizabeth Somer



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in focus

Readers share the yoga they practice in front of public art.



"This is the Southbank Centre in London. As an academic and yoga teacher, I divide my time between my books and my mat. For me, it's the perfect split."

Zeynep Gurtin,
London, England



"It took me about 10 attempts to nail a Handstand while in Nice, France, on the French Riviera. It's where the wine never stops and the views are to die for—a perfect spot."

Erin Motz (@erinmotz),
Tampa, Florida;
guest pinner for
@YogaJournal on Pinterest



"I believe in a loving creator and feel that 'love' is the single most powerful word that can heal. When I found this sculpture, I had to capture an offering."

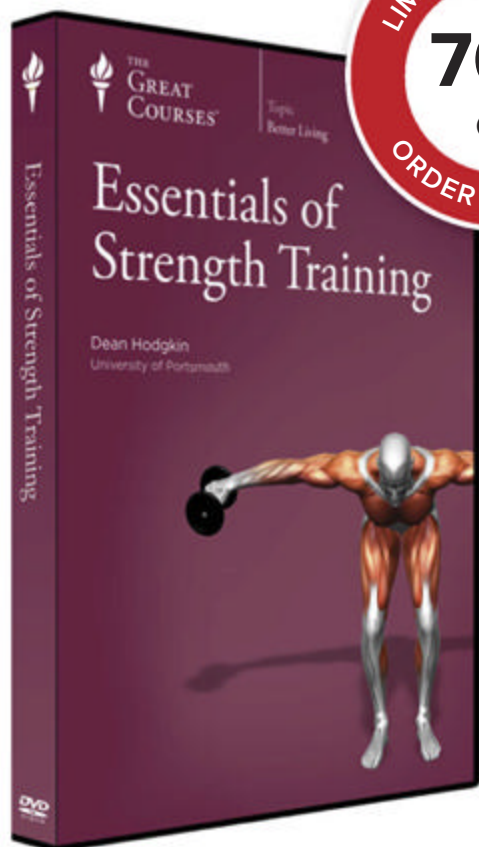
Ali Jafri,
New York City



"I decided to practice in public for the first time in front of the beautiful murals that art students had painted around Nassau. I had lots of onlookers, and some people joined in."

Alexandra Kaufmann-Fox,
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International fitness expert Dean Hodgkin has presented master classes and seminars to fitness instructors in more than 30 countries. While at Leicester College, Mr. Hodgkin was awarded the Certificate in Exercise and Health Studies by the Physical Education Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the leading qualification in the field at the time. At the 2012 International Fitness Showcase—Europe's largest group exercise event—Mr. Hodgkin received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his services to the fitness industry.

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—George, Melbourne, Australia

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What is TMI in yoga class?

By Jessie Lucier

Some yoga teachers weave personal stories of romance, illness, and more into their instruction, while others stick to alignment and sequencing. We asked students and well-known teachers how much is too much when it comes to sharing personal information.

Something on your mind?

Send us your questions to start the discussion at letters@yogajournal.com.

Teachers should ask themselves if they are telling stories to boost their own egos or if the stories are intended to enhance morale and union in the room. The line can be drawn with "karma yoga," which is doing or teaching without expecting anything in return. When a teacher is humble and authentically shares experience without the desire for personal gain, **intimate details can perhaps inspire someone on a deeper level.**

Scott Harig

Hot Power Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga teacher,
Pure Yoga, New York City

When a teacher shares personal stories about a yoga journey, it can demystify the yoga process and the teacher. Many students feel alone in their difficulties, so it helps to hear about someone else's challenges. But, **it's important for teachers to keep stories short, relevant, and aimed at student illumination and not teacher glorification.** Too much irrelevant talk in class can interfere with quieting the mind, which negates the purpose of yoga. And when teachers allow or encourage students to put them on pedestals, it is distracting.

Michele Pernetta

Director/chief instructor of Fierce Grace,
London, England

I've had teachers who just seem to want to hear themselves talk, either to avoid silence or because they thought they should, which is distracting and annoying. I've also had teachers who shared details of their lives that have touched me deeply and helped me with my own yoga practice. For example, one of my Bikram teachers shared how she could barely bend over when she started yoga. That was powerful because it allowed me to see the power yoga has to transform bodies.

Sarah Curry

14-year student of
yoga, Miami, Florida

Some of the best classes I teach happen when I let go and say the rawest stuff. Whether it's sharing my biggest fear (that people don't like me) or gravest mistake (I was arrested for a DUI), I have the unique opportunity to bring my real self into the studio and bond through personal story. When students see teachers as we truly are, we're able to build community and create meaningful change.

Mark Stefanowski

Co-founder of Outlaw Yoga,
Boulder, Colorado

When I do teacher trainings, one of my goals is to help upcoming teachers cultivate the neutrality of mind needed to be impersonally personal, allowing for nonattachment. Then, sharing personal experience flows easily between teacher and students, and all are uplifted. **It can be empowering and healing for both teacher and student.**

Seva Simran Singh Khalsa

Kundalini Yoga teacher trainer and
integrative healer, San Francisco

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Mary Clare Sweet

A Nebraska-based yogini finds her groove bringing rock 'n' roll to yoga.

From a musical family (her uncle is Matthew Sweet), Mary Clare Sweet followed her passion for rhythm and dance to New York City, where she became a student of the venerable Sri Dharma Mittra, founder of the Dharma Yoga Center. From there, Sweet's yoga career has taken off. At age 26, she opened her first vin-yasa studio in Omaha, Nebraska: Lotus House of Yoga. Five years later, she is the owner of five Lotus House locations and a regular teacher at yoga festivals nationwide.

What does your practice look like?

My day starts with meditation and breathwork. It's not easy, since I want to check my phone first thing when I get up, but I try to resist, sitting for about 10 minutes and then doing Kundalini exercises, including the Ego Eradicator. In total, I try to practice yoga for an hour a day. Some days, I'll just let my body move, like when I was a ballet and jazz dancer.

How were you introduced to yoga?

When I was growing up, my mom practiced in a basement studio with tapestries on the walls. And I grew up dancing around the house with my parents and rock-musician uncle. There was always a token yoga class at dance camp. But it wasn't until I moved to New York City and met Dharma Mittra that I thought, 'This is what I want to feel all the time'—the way I felt when I looked into his eyes and saw the spark inside his heart. There was undeniable compassion.

Music is big for you and for Lotus House of Yoga. How is it incorporated into your classes?

Making a yoga playlist requires intention. I base mine on the chakras, starting with grounding music that brings you into the moment. Then I move into rhythmic sounds that you can feel around the second [svadhisthana] chakra. Next, I bring in music that is fiery for the third [manipura] chakra. For the heart chakra, I use music that helps students tap into collective consciousness. Near the end of class, the songs get more poetic to help students center on self-expression and the fifth [visuddha] chakra. In the final moments, I want angelic sounds that can activate the third eye and crown chakra. I'm looking for vibrations that dissolve your ego. **JOELLE HAHN**

JEREMY DREIER



LEARN MORE

For one of
Mary Clare's
playlists, visit
[yogajournal.com/
sweetounds](http://yogajournal.com/sweetounds)

in the DETAILS

Sweet shares a few more of her favorite things.

Pose

Navasana [Boat Pose] lights a fire in me to speak my truth—to say what I mean and mean what I say—without feeling afraid.

Song

"You Make Loving Fun," by Fleetwood Mac. It reminds me not to take things too seriously.

Practice Space

I feel safe and stable at my mom's house and dad's house. There's a root-chakra energy there; this is where I came from.

Food

I eat seaweed in everything: seaweed salads, wraps, sushi. It offers phytonutrients; it's salty, savory, and so versatile.

Color

Since I was a little girl, yellow has been my favorite color. It means life, sustenance, growth, sunshine, and courage.

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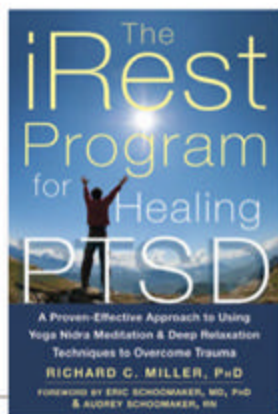
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#101

I'M A YOGI

demi runas

Elite golfer and 2015 Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour rookie in Torrance, California
Interview by Carin Gorrell

FAVORITE POSE

Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II). For some reason, when I'm in that stance with my arms out, I feel very strong.

I started playing golf tournaments at age 8; I'm a veteran at 23. I got my 2015 LPGA card in September 2014. I've been working for this pretty much my whole life, and when I got my card, I thought, 'Is this really happening?' I had a mild existential crisis! My journey is just starting again. I'm so excited to compete with the girls I've been watching on TV since I was in high school. I'm ready for it.

I've been practicing yoga for almost a year now. People had been telling me to try it, that it would really help my golf game. Then a friend of mine, a tattoo artist, started a donation-based class out of his studio and asked me to go. I remember being nervous, thinking, 'What if I'm awful at this?' I tend to be a perfectionist. But the instructor was really welcoming and made me feel comfortable. I got hooked right away. I really enjoy vinyasa flow.

I've always been busy minded; I do a lot of forward thinking. Golf is such a mental game—when I get frustrated, it seeps into everything. Yoga helps me clear my head and get over it. It helps me focus on one shot at a time, on being there, on not getting too far ahead of myself.

I started seeing a new sports psychologist at the same time I picked up yoga. He's more holistic; we do meditation every other session and work on not attaching to thoughts, not letting them grow. So if I hit a bad shot, I can look at it and think, 'OK, that wasn't great, but I still have a chance, so let's go see what I have to work with,' as opposed to freaking out.

Inversions have always been really hard for me. It's weird having my feet over my head—it's a trust thing. But I just succeeded in doing Headstand for the first time. My teacher said, "Don't be afraid to teeter; you'll find your balance," and that really resonated with me. That's how life is: I'm going to go back and forth, I'll have good times and bad times, but I will find my balance. 🧘

WORDS TO LIVE BY

"Get better every day. It doesn't have to be something big—it can be something small. As long as you're getting better every day, that's success."



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